

HISTORICAL REPORTS

400.01 Cabinet of the Northern Illinois Conference Historical Report

Hwa-Young Chong, Dean of the Cabinet

The 2025-2026 conference year has been marked by grace, hope, and faithful mission. Under the gracious and visionary leadership of Bishop Dan Schwerin, the cabinet has embraced its calling to serve the whole conference with joy and faithfulness. As we moved from the Year of Grace in 2025 to the Year of Practicing Hope in 2026, our journey took on deeper meaning. Appointment making, church conferences, one-on-one conversations with clergy, visits to congregations, mission engagements, and social witnesses all became expressions of our shared commitment to make disciples and serve the world.

In this journey, we have walked through changing seasons together: a season of grief when churches have closed their doors, a season of new hope when congregations have found new life together through merger, and a season of excitement and new beginnings when a new congregation is born through church planting. In every season, we are reminded that God is faithfully and tenderly present with us. God is in it all.

I find that the work of the cabinet is often demanding. There are long days, difficult decisions, and moments of deep stress. As a cabinet, we have sought God's wisdom amid challenges and conflicts in our congregations. We have celebrated vibrant mission and ministry across the conference. We are deeply grateful for our hard-working and dedicated pastors and laity in our urban, suburban, and rural areas. I have learned that we cannot do this work by our own strength. Without spiritual grounding, we cannot serve well. So, we return again and again to the spiritual practices of faith, following the examples of the early church as witnessed in Acts 2:42. Whenever we gather, we begin with worship. We listen to the Word of God together. We share our reflections. We break bread when we can. We pray for one another, for our clergy and laity, for our churches, and for the world we are sent to serve. In a time of rapid change and global uncertainty, prayer remains both our anchor and our calling.

This past year has opened our eyes to a growing need for faithful social witness in our hurting world. Each of us has responded in our own way, seeking to embody the justice and mercy of God wherever we are sent. We are reminded that the Wesleyan vision of personal and social holiness is not simply a theological tradition. It is a commitment that transforms our faith into action and our words into witness.

Part of living out that commitment is learning to lead across cultures with humility and care. We meet with the Wisconsin cabinet twice a year, and it has been a genuine joy to know our Wisconsin partners and grow in relationship together. Our partnership continues to be a gift. This past January, we came together for cultural competency training. It was a timely and stretching experience. As cross-racial and cross-cultural (CRCC) appointments grow, and as our communities become more diverse, this work has become even more important. As we are deeply intentional about supporting and cultivating CRCC ministry, we are extremely grateful to share with you that there will be new cohorts for CRCC pastors in our conference starting this fall. We are committed to learning and growing together so that we may lead with greater wisdom, humility, and capacity.

We carry the gifts of this year forward with gratitude. Grace has met us in unexpected places. Hope has called us forward, often beyond what was comfortable. Through it all, we have been reminded that we are not alone. We are the body of Christ, connected to one another and led by the Spirit. Please keep Bishop Dan Schwerin and the cabinet in your prayers. Your prayers and support mean so much to all of us.

It is a blessing and a joy to serve alongside you.

400.02 Connectional Ministries Historical Report

Rev. Fabiola Grandon-Mayer, Director of Connectional Ministries

The Director of Connectional Ministries' role is to ensure that our conference's mission and vision are reflected throughout our work. This includes providing support for program ministries, collaborating with the administrative team, and strengthening connections among various ministries within the conference. It is also essential to maintain strong relationships with the broader United Methodist Church by remaining connected to its general boards, agencies, commissions, and committees.

Rooted in the theological understanding that we are stronger together than apart, I continue to foster collaboration, coordination, alignment, and leadership development across our conference's ministries, committees, board, and districts.

A special word of gratitude to Amania Drain, who began working for our conference as Project Manager/Consultant for three Task Forces and then transitioned to work with 5 different committees: Religion and Race, Discipleship and Spiritual Formation, Youth and Young People Ministries, Status and Role of Women, and Older Adult Ministries. She staffs and resources these committees as they do their work throughout the year.

Our office, along with the communication department, continues to support the work of various groups and districts through our Event Coordinator and Communication Specialist, Ariel Alonso, and Lisa Smith, who work tirelessly to ensure logistics support, clear communication, good promotion, and meaningful events.

We continue to follow the program structure outlined in our Standing Rules, organized into three fundamental areas, each with an assigned liaison. Discipleship Ministries Area (Liaison: Deaconess Joy Hayag), Vital Congregations Area (Liaison: Rev. Megan Smick), and Justice and Mercy (Liaison: Rev. Britt Cox). Each area representative remains connected to and informed about the work of the various groups within their area, and they provide reports to the Annual Conference Shepherding Team.

We have also been intentional in creating spaces that nurture and strengthen pastoral leadership for clergy serving in Cross-Racial/Cross-Cultural (CRCC) appointments. With the help of Rev. Hwa-Young Chong and Rev. Danita Anderson, we have designed an annual retreat for CRCC pastors, creating an opportunity for rest, reflection, and renewed vision for ministry. Cross-Racial/Cross-Cultural ministry is especially important in our conference as it reflects the growing diversity of our communities and embodies our commitment to equity, inclusion, and the full participation of all people in the life of the church. It calls leaders to navigate cultural differences with humility, deepen intercultural competence, and build bridges of understanding that strengthen the body of Christ. Building on this work, we will soon launch a cohort of pastors serving in Cross-Racial/Cross-Cultural (CRCC) appointments, focused on fostering peer learning, mutual support, and leadership development.

A significant part of my role continues to be overseeing the production and execution of the Annual Conference session. I work closely with the Annual Conference planning committee to coordinate all aspects of this vital gathering, including site logistics, agenda development, budget planning, and communications. I am grateful for the team's deep commitment, whose collaboration and experience were instrumental in ensuring a meaningful, Spirit-led, and well-organized conference.

The Office of Connectional Ministries continues to serve as a bridge, connecting people, ideas, and resources for the sake of God's mission. It remains committed to nurturing a spirit of collaboration, encouraging innovation, and equipping leaders to serve with faithfulness and courage. As the church looks to the future, the office stands ready to guide and support the conference in living out its connectional calling with hope and purpose.

I am deeply grateful for the trust placed in me by Bishop Dan Schwerin and for the opportunity to serve in this role. It is a true privilege to work alongside so many dedicated and faithful leaders across our conference. Together, we celebrate and embody the renewed vision of The United Methodist Church—to love boldly, serve joyfully, and lead courageously—as we continue to strengthen our connection, support one another in ministry, and move forward with hope and purpose in the work to which we are called.

400.03 Communications Ministry Area Historical Report

Rev. Victoria Rebeck, Director Communications, Northern Illinois Conference

The Communications ministry area continued to use an expanding breadth of media to share information with annual conference constituents, the UMC, and the communities where United Methodists do ministry.

The NIC Reporter was published every other month. This newspaper includes information that was shared electronically (particularly on the website and linked to from the weekly eNews electronic newsletter). It includes summaries of events that took place over the previous two months, decisions made by the Annual Conference Shepherding Team, news of note from our churches, and alerts to upcoming events. Information from partner organizations, such as Kids Above All, appears, as do appointment changes announced over the previous eight weeks. The paper mostly informs those who do not feel the need for the most up-to-date information.

Preparing and publishing the newspaper continues to require a lot of time, which has challenged staff to stay abreast of other important tasks that are expected of communications departments these days, particularly due to the expansion of electronic and video media that are used by many people. The bishop makes increasing use of video messaging, due to his covering the Wisconsin and Northern Illinois Conferences. Therefore, the communications department is contracting with a consultant to determine the most efficient use of limited financial and personnel resources.

Because readers like denomination-wide stories, we are including those in the print newspaper and the eNews. North Central Jurisdiction news is also reported when available.

The website is the primary repository of information because it can be updated at any time. We also add links to stories that enable readers to dig in deeper or get more information about mentioned information. Content on the website is easy to find when the reader uses the search function. The link is on the far right on the upper navigation.

The communications area contracted with Big Heart Creative to design a new conference website. Because of the workload and urgent deadlines placed upon the communications team, uploading new information has been delayed. (The website has been built.) A solution was devised and content is being loaded as this report is being written.

Use of social media has expanded. Responses show that visitors to the media particularly like posts that feature people in the conference, be they leaders or local church people engaging in community ministries.

Another significant source of content is the extensive amount of events and opportunities offered by conference committees. Northern Illinois has a particularly abundant amount of these, which keep our media full of new information and demonstrate that apportionment sharing comes back to churches and individuals to strengthen congregational ministries and opportunities to express and develop faith.

Lisa Smith, the communications specialist and assistant, is very busy developing promotions for these conference events and opportunities, leading your audio-visual presentation of Annual Conference in session, serving as managing editor of The Reporter Newspaper, working on the conference journal (which has required of her research on facts and much more than the demanding work of laying out pages).

Several stories from Northern Illinois Conference appeared in other media, including local news outlets, the United Methodist News Service, and United Methodist Insight, an independent source of church-wide and ecumenical news.

The budget for 2026 has been significantly decreased, so the staff will make decisions to redirect the communications ministry to meet changing needs. This will require shifts in how constituents will receive conference information.

400.04 Congregational Development Historical Report

Rev. Christian Coon, Director of Congregational Development

It's understandable for churches to want to highlight new ministries that attract large numbers of people. It is important to have these kinds of celebrations! On the other hand, it's usually not as exciting to trumpet things that are done behind the scenes. "We are building new systems!" isn't something that gets as much attention, but I am just as excited about the systems we have begun to put into place this past year for the Office of Congregational Development that I hope will support our churches in more foundational ways.

We have reconfigured our conference committee to help reflect some of these changes. What was the Committee on Congregational Development and Redevelopment (Code Red) is now the PATH (Planting and Thriving) Team. We have divided that team into three subteams: Revitalization, Planting, and Innovation. Here is some of the work we have done:

Revitalization: We have developed a new revitalization process that will give churches a snapshot of their current health and a roadmap to help them flourish. Church leaders begin by taking an online assessment that will put them in one of four tiers. From there, a church will be assigned two trained "Remissioning Guides" to help guide them to greater health. We spent this past year training our guides, developing the online assessment and having a few churches try the assessment out. We are now ready to have several churches test this process out this next year as we see what works and what still needs to be improved. We hope to unveil this process for the whole conference next year. In addition, we continue to offer the regular Tuesday Teaching videos, sponsor workshops, and organize cohorts for leaders.

Planting: In addition to a new revitalization system, we are introducing a new planting system, as well, to identify potential planters, assess gifts and graces, offer training to planters who are assessed to be planters, and then organize a cohort so they stay connected. In addition, planters will have quarterly meetings with conference leaders to check in on metrics and goals. We are pleased to have officially launched two new communities of faith this past year: Free Recovery Community Church in Chicago (led by Seth Botts) and Table of Grace Church in Rockford (led by Violet Johnicker). Our plan is to launch two more new faith communities in the coming year. The planting subteam of PATH will be focusing on these areas: recruit more planters, including individuals outside of our conference; discern potential areas and people groups for plants; and assess our current closed churches for possible relaunch possibilities.

Innovation: We are excited to follow the bishop's call to innovate and are particularly excited about Kenda Creasy Dean as the featured speaker at the School for Leadership in late September. Dr. Dean is the author of many books, including "Innovating for Love" and will guide our leaders introducing innovation in our contexts. We also kicked off our intentional work around Fresh Expressions this past year with Michael Beck, the Director of FX for the United Methodist Church. We have had workshops and monthly calls with Michael to help churches experiment with "mini plants" in their communities. This work will continue with Michael through the end of this calendar year.

If anything in this report strikes a chord, please do not hesitate to contact Christian Coon, the Director of Congregational Development or a member of the PATH Team. We are laying the groundwork for sustained health in our conference!

400.05 Annual Conference Shepherdding Team Historical Report

Mark Manzi and Caleb Hong, Co-Chairs

The Annual Conference Shepherdding Team (ACST) and its counterpart organizations at the district level, the District Shepherdding Teams (DSTs), were created to advance the mission of the Northern Illinois Conference (NIC). Their purpose is to ensure the proper use and alignment of resources in achieving this mission. The ACST serves as a place for consultation, advice, and decision-making, providing vital connections between Conference administrative and ministry areas, the Cabinet, District Shepherdding Teams, and local churches. Through this work, ACST fosters trust, collaboration, and accountability as we live out our shared calling.

In 2025-2026, ACST actively engaged in several key areas to enhance the work of the Northern Illinois Conference:

- **Consultation and Guidance:** ACST heard updates on the work of the NIC Ministry Camp Task Force and support the work and trajectory of the Task Force. The team heard from the three NIC Ethnic Caucus leaders and celebrated the work they are doing. We also consulted with the Rev. Lindsey Joyce NIC Rapid Response Team leader and heard what the team was doing and indicated our willingness to support the team in their efforts as needed.
- **Collaboration with CCFA:** The ACST and CCFA voted on a memorandum of understanding to further identify and strengthen the role of each body as we collaborate on the creation of the NIC budget that focuses on program work stewarding financial and leadership resources to provide maximum missional impact.
- **Strengthening Collaboration with DSTs:** This continues to be a key priority for the ACST. We have specifically carved out time at each meeting to hear from DST leaders and work to support their efforts in equipping local churches with tools and resources to ensure that local needs, challenges, and shared ministry opportunities are available.
- **Leading as a Learning Organization:** Of key importance to the ACST is the opportunity to be a learning organization. Each summer, the ACST in conjunction with the DSTs participates in a retreat to engage in opportunities to strengthen our leadership abilities. Summer of 2025 had the ACST focused on “Shared Leadership: Exploring Holy Currencies.” During our time together we were reminded of the abundant gifts God has already placed in our hands—time, truth, relationships, gracious leadership, place, and money—and how they can flow together to create sustainable, life-giving ministry.
- **Facilitating Communications:** The ACST has several ways to facilitate communications. One is listening to each other as the ACST includes leaders, both clergy and lay, of NIC committees as well as our DST leaders and conference staff. We also listen to members of Annual Conference in our Table Talk time. We have heard much and are working to integrate what we learn from these conversations in our work at every meeting. We also heard more direct communication was needed and the Co-Chairs of the ACST have committed to emailing updates of our work to the pastors, lay leaders, and council chairpersons at every local church in the NIC.

As we move forward, ACST remains committed to fostering collaboration and connection, resourcing local churches, and ensuring that conference structures support the vitality of the congregations of all local churches of the NIC. Our focus will continue to be on strengthening relationships between ACST, DSTs, and CCFA, deepening our adaptive leadership capacity, and providing guidance for emerging needs within the conference.

400.06 Council on Finance and Administration (CCFA) Historical Report

Kim Emery, Chair

In 2025, NIC combined the Conference and General Church apportionments. NIC collected \$5,056,797—80% of approved budget—to support missions and ministries, 9% increase from 2024. This is the highest percentage we have achieved since 2016.

NIC paid \$1,082,126, 81% of our General Church apportionments in 2025, compared to \$778,533, 41% in 2024.

Apportionment comparison between 2024 and 2025:

- 24 churches paid over 100% in 2024 and 2025
- 53 churches gave more in percentage in 2025, compared to 49 churches in 2024
- 61 churches decreased their giving in 2025, compared with 137 in 2024 (including closed/merged churches)
- 26 churches gave 0 in 2025, compared with 33 churches in 2024 (including closed/merged churches)

At the 2025 Annual Conference, NIC adopted a simplified apportionment formula for 2026 based on income tiers. Churches with incomes under \$250,000 are assessed 8 percent. Those with incomes between \$250,000 and \$750,00 are assessed 10 percent. Those with incomes over \$750,000 are assessed 12 percent. Income is defined by the church statistical report (line 55 minus lines 53 and 54b). Apportionments are based on the latest statistical report completed as of Jan. 31 of apportionment year.

Repair the Harm: As part of the Boy Scouts settlement, NIC paid our portion, \$742,429, in April 2024 to the General Council on Finance and Administration, as part of the \$30 million from the United Methodist Church. As of December 2025, NIC collected 100%, \$742,429 from 108 churches and 212 individuals to reimburse NIC for our payment to GCFA.

Solidarity Fund: In 2025, Bishop Schwerin started an Emergency Solidarity Fund, with support from the Conference Committee on Finance and Administration and Advocacy Partners Subcommittee, after listening to Hispanic/Latinx pastors share their stories of how their congregations were navigating challenging days. NIC distributed \$60,000 support to the 20 Hispanic/Latinx churches and ministries within our conference. Assistance focused on immediate and critical needs.

Red Door: NIC created Red Door to provide loans to local churches. Several churches had challenges paying their mortgages in 2025. Two churches are selling to fulfill their mortgage obligations. One church is struggling to pay their full amount. Two churches paid off their mortgage. Currently, the outstanding amount from 15 churches is over \$11 million.

NICUM: NIC's insurance ministry's mission is to provide a long-term, sustainable insurance program. In 2025, NIC received only 82% of premiums, a decrease from 90% in 2024. Churches are expected to pay their insurance premiums in full.

Board of Pension and Health Benefits: In 2025: NIC did not increase its clergy flat rate to churches, \$1,850 per month, \$22,200 per year. Churches submitted 92% of billed premiums, compared to 80% in 2024. Clergy remitted 92% of their clergy responsibility portion, up from 85% in 2024. Clergy Fund funded all of retirees' health benefits, \$1.2 million. The balance was \$55,028 as of 12/31/25. Compass will start January 1, 2026, 2025 was dedicated to education.

NIC must pay 100% of all bills regardless of shortfalls.

400.07 Board of Trustees Historical Report

Rev. Katie Voigt, President

Much like last year was a year of new staff on the Conference Board of Trustees, this year brought new elected leadership to the Board who had not previously served, so there have been many questions again this year! Learning is a great thing, though, as it helps us all to better understand what we do together.

We are responsible for 6 parsonages, 1 campus ministry building, 2 camps, 6 buildings where New Faith Communities are worshipping, 4 properties in the Lake South District that we are working with the Cabinet about prioritization, 4 parsonages from previous closed and sold churches, 6 buildings we are actively trying to sell, 1 campus ministry building we lease, and 3 lease office spaces.

This takes much work to navigate conditions of buildings, connecting with the Cabinet to decide which properties might be in helpful ministry locations and which ones we can sell, and coordinating work together. Due to the fact that many of us still work, the Board of Trustees hired a consultant to help us clean out buildings, be available to meet contractors, if needed, and to help us keep an eye on all that we own. We still have a Board of Trustees contact person for each property, but having this extra help has allowed us to move forward with projects much more quickly.

As we have worked closely with the Cabinet, one of the processes we've worked to improve this year is the process of closing a church. We're hoping that by creating a checklist so everyone knows whose responsibility each step in the process is, that we will have fewer legal messes we need to clean up later.

The Board of Trustees spent time this year reviewing and amending our internal policies and practices. We want to be able to respond as best we can between meetings to help make sure those living in our parsonages or who have space in our buildings won't have to suffer through challenging conditions any longer than needed.

Additionally, we have spent some clarifying roles and structure within our polity. It seems that many people have functioned with the understanding that District Boards on Church Location and Building are sub-committees of the Conference Board of Trustees. In reading through Disciplinary expectations, we realized that this is not the case. The District Boards on Church Location and Building have distinct responsibilities, as does the Conference Board of Trustees. BOT started working on cleaning up some of these boundaries.

Properties sold 2025-2026: Chemung, Rockford: Bethany, Freedom, Franklin Grove, Malden, Mandell, Part of Reynoldswood Camp

Properties purchased 2025-2026: None

Trustees: Chuck Freiberger (vice president), Pastor Jeff Brace, Grant Bailey, Dan Saavedra, Karen Doty, Rev. Sarah Hong, Bob Wood, Mark Dunham, Jim Miller, Rev. Krista Paradiso.

400.08 NIC Committee on Personnel Historical Report

Rev. Rachel Birkhahn-Rommelfanger, Chair

During 2025–2026, the Committee on Personnel continued its work to strengthen personnel policies and practices for the Northern Illinois Conference. This included completing a full update of the Personnel Policies Manual, which was rolled out to staff in July. The committee also continued refining specific policies, including IT, travel, and hybrid work, as well as attending to benefits and compensation matters and supporting the transition to a new payroll system.

A significant portion of our work focused on organizational structure. The committee reviewed and discussed the conference's organizational chart, including lines of supervision, accountability, and staff support, and began developing recommendations to bring greater clarity and alignment.

The committee also supported local churches and SPRCs through educational efforts. In 2025 we offered sessions of staffing of local churches. We continue our educational work in 2026 in partnership with conference staff, including Assistant to the Bishop Rev. Danita Anderson, we helped plan and promote webinars on topics such as itineracy and appointments with additional trainings planned.

Looking ahead to 2026-2027, we plan to offer a sample Personnel Manual for local churches as we continue exploring how best to help our congregations and staff thrive.

400.09 Conference Committee Pension and Health Benefits Historical Report

Beth Swanick, Chair

- Focus through Q1, 2026 was changed to COMPASS retirement plan
 - Offered educational sessions such as Lunch 'N Learns, and Benefits Zoom meetings for both clergy and local church finance and Staff Parish Relations committees
 - Many one-on-one calls/inquiries from/to clergy from Conference Benefits Officer, Conference Benefits Administrator, to Conference Treasurer, a few to Conference Committee on Pension and Health Benefit chair, and to Wespeth offices
 - After a few technical glitches, we seem to be functioning smoothly
 - Thank you for your patience and cooperation
 - For Compass, the clergy retirement plan, churches' calculations is: flat rate at \$150/month, plus 7% of total compensation (if clergy has a parsonage, 35% of cash compensation is added to compensation.)
- 2026 HealthFlex flat rates charged to churches were set at \$1850 per month, no increase from 2025. The conference and the clergy incurring a sizeable increase over the previous year. (Those amounts are available elsewhere.)
 - We have tried to address costs for 2027 earlier this year, but as of this writing, decisions have not been made.
 - We have begun communications through the cabinet for clergy and churches to anticipate another sizeable increase for 2027 healthcare premiums due to the Conference's rate increase from Wespeth, and the ever-increasing cost of healthcare.
 - Current plans are to split that increase between clergy, the Conference, and churches.
- We continue to work with the Clergy Fund Committee. We appreciate their generosity, guidance and support to allow health benefits for retired clergy. Without their support, retired clergy would not have health benefits.

400.10 Red Door Fund Historical Report

Doug Roselieb, Chair

Started in 2013, Red Door Fund, separately incorporated, is a ministry of the Northern Illinois Conference to offer loans to local churches. Wintrust Bank along with Northern Illinois Conference provided the needed liquidity to create the Red Door Fund and allow local churches to benefit from the efficiency of size and improved credit as well as be relieved of the uncertainty surrounding the lending market.

The Board responsibilities include approving loans, monitoring payments of local churches towards the obligations, assures compliance with lending agreements with funders, and protects the conference's interest in avoiding payments against loan guarantees.

In 2018 Red Door refinanced our debt with Wintrust Bank. Three loans totaling \$17.5 million and a maturity date of May 18, 2028, were initiated. The repayment structure of these loans was requested to provide flexibility due to the fluctuating incoming cash flow streams from the churches and interest rate volatility.

In December 2024, Red Door paid off one of the loans with Wintrust ahead of schedule. The amount currently owed to Wintrust is approximately \$9.5 million and by the maturity date of May 18, 2028, we will owe Wintrust approximately \$7.5 million assuming no additional lump sum payments to them. Currently, Red Door is assuming refinancing this balance in 2028, but alternatives are also being considered.

Additionally, there were three original covenants with Wintrust Bank that remained in effect with our refinancing in 2018. Because of our ability to dramatically reduce our principal balance with Wintrust, Red Door requested the Minimum Debt Service Coverage Ratio covenant be removed and was granted by Wintrust. This allows Red Door flexibility when collecting additional funds over and above the regularly scheduled principal and interest payments from our local churches allowing us to build additional reserves when churches pay off their notes with Red Door ahead of schedule.

In 2025, Red Door also made a request to Wintrust Bank to consider lowering their collateral requirement because of the amount of principal reduction that Red Door has been able to achieve since 2018. Wintrust agreed to lower the amount to \$15 million giving Northern Illinois Conference more flexibility on previously collateralized assets.

As of 1/31/26, 17 churches remain involved with Red Door NFP with an outstanding loan balance of \$11,011,922. Red Door NFP has over \$600,000 in reserves with an additional \$307,000 of accrued interest owed.

Two of the loans, Cornerstone UMC and Wheatland Salem which accounts for roughly 50% of the Red Door Loans, should be paid off in calendar year 2026 as the properties have been actively on the market to sell.

First Korean UMC in Wheeling has had financial difficulties over the last year and has been inconsistent in paying their scheduled principal and interest payments to Red Door but has been in contact with Elaine Moy, Treasurer to NIC and Red Door, and has been communicating with her on how they intend to get back on track or ultimately sell the property or merge.

400.11 Midwest Methodist Foundation Historical Report

Rev. Chris Walters, President & CEO

Organized in 1949, the Foundation functions as an independent 501(c)(3) public charity with the mission of “encouraging lifelong generosity with God’s abundance.” The Foundation carries out its mission by partnering with many individuals, churches, and organizations to provide several services:

- Investment Management
- Endowment Genesis and Growth
- Trustee & Custodial Services
- Planned Giving Programs
- Donor Consultation
- Stewardship Development
- Financial Best Practices
- Ministry Grants & Scholarships

As of December 31, 2025, the Board of Directors with full voice and vote were:

Board Chair: Marta Rodriguez, CFA, Humboldt Park UMC, Chicago
Vice Chair: Lisa Butler, MPA, Morgan Park UMC, Chicago
Secretary: Estefany Sanabria, Esq., Humboldt Park UMC, Chicago
Treasurer: Sandra Schild, CPA, Barrington UMC, Barrington
Ergeline Calimlim, First UMC of Chicago Temple
Rev. Avani Christian, New Hope UMC, West Chicago & Hope UMC, Naperville
Brad Colby, First UMC of La Grange, La Grange
Bruce Grabenkort, Barrington UMC, Barrington
George Groves, Community UMC, Naperville
Naida Langdon, Morgan Park UMC, Chicago
Eugene Williams, South Shore UMC, Chicago

The three ex officio Board members are the Foundation's president, the resident bishop, and the Conference treasurer.

The full-time staff members of the Foundation are Rev. Chris Walters, President, and Demetra Kidd, Client Relations Associate.

The Foundation retains SouthCol Advisors, LLC, as its investment consultant. The investment opportunities available through the Foundation offer churches and UMC-related organizations professionally managed, well-diversified accounts, invested according to the guidelines for socially responsible investing outlined in The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church.

As of February 28, 2026, the Foundation had approximately \$113 million under management through nearly 700 accounts.

Since 1999 the Foundation has provided several grants each year, totaling more than \$1.2 million.

Starting in 2026, the Foundation grants \$50,000 each year to local churches through its Creative Ministries grants program.

Starting in 2025, the Foundation grants to the Northern Illinois Conference half of the funds needed for the Conference's partnership with Foundry Commercial to facilitate property oversight and planning.

The Foundation was one of the sponsors of the Ignite! Conference at Wespeth in March 2026, attended by 75 people of all ages from across the North Central Jurisdiction exploring a call to ministry.

The Foundation continues to participate in Dollars for Scholars (DFS), operated by the United Methodist Higher Education Foundation. DFS matches support from a student's church, UMHEF, participating United Methodist-related schools, and participating Conference Foundations, up to \$4000.

The Foundation is in its fifth year of granting the Uplifting Young Methodists Scholarship to assist minority United Methodist students to attend a trade school, community college, college, or university, granting three \$2500 scholarships to undergraduates in the fall and \$3500 to one Carolyn J. Cook Scholar.

The Foundation is currently sponsoring four NIC clergy and their local churches in a three-year intensive "Cultivating a Culture of Renewal" journey with leaders across the country.

The Foundation and Horizons Stewardship partner to provide on-demand generosity coaching to Northern Illinois Methodist churches at no cost and no obligation to churches through the "Generosity Hotline."

400.12 Retired Clergy Association Historical Report

Rev. Darneather Murph-Heath, Chair

The Retired Clergy Association is honored to continue to recognize newly retired clergy during our Annual Conference each year with our Luncheon held on site at the Annual Conference. Formerly retired clergy and newly retired clergy gather at a meal hosted by the officers of the Retired Clergy Association and the Board of Pensions with joy.

Current officers of the RCA are Rev. Darneather Murph-Heath-Chair, Rev. Dwight Stewart-Vice Chair, and Rev. Charlette Hoffmann-Secretary. (Rev. Charlette Hoffmann has now joined the Church Triumphant-April 2026)

We thank our Bishop Dan Schwerin for being present to offer words of greetings, and the General Board of Pensions for their partnership with us.

Programs:

June 11, 2025-Luncheon was held after the Retirement Worship Celebration. We followed the theme of the Annual Conference for this time of food, fellowship, and celebration. It is always a time of joy to welcome in a new class of retirees, and to celebrate with those that have been in “retirement land” for some time.

October 14, 2025-Our Fall Program was led by our own Bishop, Dan Schwerin bringing us “Psalm 133: Some Theology, Some Direction, and Some Poetry.” It was a great time of sharing, and gave the Retired Clergy, an opportunity to get to know Bishop Dan a little better which was one of our goals. It was good to be up close and personal with Bishop Dan.

This program was held at Bethany of Fox Valley UMC, who are great ministry partners, and they always host us with a great lunch.

Each year we are honored to present these two fellowship opportunities for our Retired Clergy and guests.

We look forward to continuing to make sure that Retired Clergy do not feel neglected and have opportunities to gather.

400.13 United Methodist Clergy Fund Historical Report

Rev. Michael Mann, President

The United Methodist Clergy Fund (the Fund) is an independent, Illinois, not-for-profit, corporation. It is organized to “procure, invest, and manage money and property, the income from which shall go toward the support of superannuated ministers, and the widows and dependent children of deceased members.” The Fund is related to the Northern Illinois Conference of the United Methodist Church (NIC) because its bylaws limit its contributions to this Conference.

Founded on October 27, 1885, the Fund was one of the first endowments in the United States to provide assistance to retirees, making it a forerunner to the concept of pension funds. In existence for over 140 years, the Fund intends to continue providing significant levels of support for retirees of the NIC.

On December 31, 2025, the Fund resources totaled \$ 38,321,305, a gain of 10.6% from 2024. Wespath informs the Fund’s investment strategy.

The Fund distributed \$1,456,000 for retiree health benefits in 2025. It plans to disburse \$1,700,000 in 2025.

The Fund averages the year-end value over the past three years to determine a yearly payout. This payout is made to the NIC to fund Health Reimbursement Accounts (HRAs) for clergy retirees and their spouses through a company called ViaBenefits. Beginning in 2026, a clergy member and their spouse each receive \$125 for every year the clergy member served (up to \$5,000 each per year). The Fund partially pays a life insurance benefit through UNUM. It paid \$73,058 in 2025.

The Fund allows the NIC to be one of the few conferences, if not the only conference, to continue providing health benefits to its retirees.

The Clergy Fund Board of Directors is comprised of lay members and clergy members. Two may be clergy and the rest must be lay persons. These persons are nominated and elected by the current board of directors. They serve for terms of four years. Retired Honorary Directors, the Chair of the Conference Board of Pensions, and the Conference Treasurer, and the Conference Benefits Manager are regularly invited to attend the quarterly meetings of the Board.

The Fund is a 501(c) (3) registered charitable organization and welcomes contributions and bequests. The Conference office can provide information for making a contribution to the Fund and joining in our mission.

- Rev. Michael Mann, President; Rev. Jim Fu, Vice-President; Robert Martin, Secretary; Edward Andersen, Treasurer; Dr. Kwang P. Chung; Jim Leoppert; Jocelyn R. Vinluan; Rev. Jamie Geiger, ex officio; Rev. Tom Harmon, ex officio; Steve Nailor, ex officio; Rev. Dr. Chris Pierson, ex officio

400.14 Board of Laity Historical Report

Connie Augsburg and Eugene Williams, NIC Co-Lay Leaders

The Board of Laity supports the Annual Conference's vision of making and supporting Christians in vital congregations. The Board is comprised of the Conference Co-Lay Leaders, District Lay Leaders and Members-at-Large from (UMM, UWFaith, Lay Servant Ministries, Scouting, Director of Connectional Ministries and Clergy Representative). We meet throughout the year to discuss conference programming that aims to educate and empower our lay members to not only live the mission of our faith, but also to communicate it to the communities in which we live and work.

Laity Session at Annual Conference in 2025 was well attended with nearly 400 attendees. The Laity Address also supported the Annual Conference Shepherdng Team and Conference Committee Finance and Administration's effort to implement a new apportionment formula, which was overwhelmingly approved.

We have been focused on "Practicing a Year of Hope," for 2026. The Laity Convocation took place on March 21st and was a huge success. Laity Convocation was an in-person event; along with three satellite listening locations. We were blessed by the generosity of our in-person host, Reverend David Price and the Glen Ellyn community of faith. We also extend thanks to pastors Joel McClellan at Freeport, Michael Hickok at Princeton and Jenny Weber of Orland. Our theme was, "Moving Forward with Hope." Attendees included Bishop Dan Schwerin, along with Laity, Clergy, District Superintendents, and Annual Conference Staff.

Bishop Schwerin provided reflections on, "Practicing Hope," along with the Bishop's Appeal video. Rev. Hope Chernich, reflected on her work with the NIC Rapid Response Team. We then enjoyed a special presentation by four amazing young adults about where they see hope in their lives, the world and their ministry setting. A very special thank you to Vanessa Cisneros, Arunima Sudhakar, Daniel Dunlap and Joshua Hayag.

We then moved into break-out rooms to consider discussing the messages from our presenters. Videos and written materials for Laity Convocation 2026, as well as for previous years, can be found on our webpage: www.umc.nic.org/laity. Go to the NIC website under the Congregational Life sub-heading.)

Your Conference Co-Lay Leaders also attended and represented laity at the Association of Conference Lay Leaders training in Nashville, and the EMC3, "Excellence in Ministry, Coaching Training." The Board of Laity will continue our efforts to ensure the Laity of the NIC is empowered and equipped for the mission that we have been assigned.

The Northern Illinois Conference is currently served by Co-Lay Leaders: Connie Augsburg and Eugene Williams.

Connie is a member of Disciples UMC in Mount Morris, Il., where she has served in several capacities. She also serves on the Extended Cabinet, the Annual Conference Shepherdng Team and the Shared Bishop's Task Force.

Eugene is a member of Chicago South Shore UMC. Eugene serves on the Executive Board of the Association of Annual Conference Lay Leaders. Eugene was elected to serve on the North Central Jurisdiction's "Administrative Review Committee," and has been chosen to serve on the Council of Bishops, "Vision-Casting Leadership Gathering."

Connie and Eugene are honored to serve the Northern Illinois Annual Conference.

400.15 NIC Committee on Lay Servant Ministries Historical Report

Peggy Hansen, Conference Director of Lay Servant Ministries

The Conference Committee for Lay Servant Ministries is committed to serve and lead in the Northern Illinois Conference! Lay Servant Ministries' mission is reflected in three words: "Caring, Leading, and Communication." The congregations of Northern Illinois continuously grow and benefit through the coordinated work of the Conference Committee on Lay Servant Ministries and the District Committees on Lay Servant Ministries ensuring that all laity can receive education, leadership and faith development. The Conference and District committees offer education through semi-annual lay academies and oversee the process of certification of Lay Servants, Lay Speakers, and Lay Ministers.

HISTORICAL REPORTS

The importance of bringing new members of the laity into lay servant ministries continues so the Basic course is frequently offered. Additionally, members of the laity are able to move along their faith journey because the districts continue to offer courses that follow the Certified Lay Servant and Certified Lay Speaker curriculum. Advanced courses are offered to address the areas of individual devotional life, leadership development, stewardship, and elements from the social principles. Additional courses continue to be offered in Spanish so more laity can participate in Lay Academies and become better leaders in their local congregations. While we currently only have one course text available in Korean, we hope to expand offerings in the future. The Conference Committee on Lay Servant Ministries offers the courses to prepare Lay Servants to respond to the call to be Certified Lay Ministers as well as provide continuous support as they respond to the call.

We are pleased to offer new courses in our districts that have been developed through Discipleship Ministries and the Training Committee of the Annual Conference Directors of Lay Servant Ministries. New courses offered in 2025 included: "Sacred Tension", "Fear of the Other", "How to Fight Racism", "Disciples in the Marketplace: Seeing Grace at Work," "Fresh Expressions" and "The Millennial Narrative: Sharing a Good Life with the Next Generation." We are looking forward to additional new courses being offered such as "Whom Shall I Send? A Comprehensive Field Guide on Certified Lay Ministry in the UMC" so members of our laity can participate with the continuous learning advocated by John Wesley.

Northern Illinois Conference, know that Lay Servant Ministries will continue to hear God's call for the laity to be in ministry, as knowledgeable leaders in their local churches, communities and across the conference. We urge all laity to become engaged in the process and network of Lay Servant Ministries; this is the way that each of our congregations will become even more vibrant as we respond to Christ's call!

Blessings to each of you!

400.16 Conference Board of Higher Education and Campus Ministry (CBHECM) Historical Report

Rev. Dr. Daniel Cochran, Co-Chair

CBHECM supports and evaluates four campus ministries that rely upon the Northern Illinois Conference (NIC) for funding: North Central College (NCC), the Inclusive Collective (IC) at the University of Illinois-Chicago, University Christian Ministry (UCM) at Northwestern University, and the Korean-American Campus Ministry at the University of Chicago.

- North Central College welcomes the Rev. Max Blalock as their new campus minister. He brings a wealth of experience with a focus on LGBTQIA+ inclusion, interfaith dialogue, and social justice. As an Elder, he receives his salary, pension, insurance, and housing allowance through CBHECM, which has secured a commitment from NCC of \$30,000 annually to help support this position. In addition to an active student body on campus, NCC's chaplaincy is actively partnering with local UMC congregations to encourage student involvement in congregational life.

- Inclusive Collective is reimagining campus ministry for commuting students. For the 2025-2026 academic year, IC launched a fellowship program that connected 6 local college students in a multi-site campus ministry. The IC Board plans to hire a part-time program director for the 2026-2027 academic year to help strengthen and expand this program to NIU at DeKalb and other area institutions where the UMC does not currently have an active presence. This shift in ministry model reduced overhead expenses, allowing CBHECM to decrease financial support from \$77,500 in 2024 to \$52,800 in 2026.
- University Christian Ministry, led by the Rev. Julie Windsor Mitchell, consistently offers a vibrant student ministry that provides an inclusive and transformative place for students to explore their faith. To recognize, celebrate, and encourage the fruitfulness of UCM, which serves over 40 students every week, CBHECM increased financial support for the first time in years while still reducing the overall program budget by \$10,000.
- The Korean-American Campus Ministry continues to provide a vibrant place for community and faith formation among students, faculty, and staff. Under the leadership of the Rev. Woo Min Lee, this ministry offers regular worship services, Bible studies, mission opportunities, and special events such as the wonderful Homecoming Alumni Celebration that invites alumni to share about the role of faith beyond college. As an ordained Elder in the NIC, Pastor Lee receives his salary, pension, insurance, and housing allowance contributions through both the CBHECM and his part-time appointment to Hyde Park UMC.

CBHECM supports these campus ministries with resources and regular site visits while conducting annual evaluations and budget reviews. CBHECM has strategically reallocated funds to align with ministry effectiveness while reducing the total program budget. Each site is encouraged to connect with area congregations to provide students with a connection to the local church and to secure additional funding beyond the NIC. Through our campus ministries, the Northern Illinois Conference is investing in the next generation of leaders who will shape a more inclusive, justice-oriented, and Christ-centered church that makes disciples for the transformation of the world.

400.17 Committee on Discipleship and Spiritual Formation (CDSF)

Historical Report

Rev. Seamus Enright, Chair

The Committee Members: Diana Davis, Ellen Feliciano, Katherine Howell, Rev. G. Morris Jarkloh, Rev. Heewon Kim, Rev. Sharon Rice, Dr. Tina Shelton, Rev. Seamus Enright (Chair); ex officio: Amania Drane (Project Manager, Strategic Goals), Rev. Fabiola Grandon-Mayer (Director of Connectional Ministries), Yvette Harris-Black (United Women in Faith Representative), Joy Hayag (Discipleship Work Area, ACST).

The Annual Conference Committee on Discipleship and Spiritual Formation is committed to supporting clergy and congregations in Northern Illinois for the sake of the Church's mission to "make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world" and especially the Northern Illinois Conference strategic goal of "making and forming new disciples."

Over the past year CDSF has been hard at work continuing to make resources and opportunities available for clergy and congregations in Northern Illinois. As part of those ongoing efforts we have:

- Worked towards strengthening the engagement and participation of the Committee, establishing and maintaining regular monthly meetings that encourage the deepening of our own discipleship.
- Planned and promoted a Conference-wide program for Bible-in-a-year reading with a monthly support group to encourage participants.
- In 2025, CDSF coordinated and produced a devotional booklet for the Annual Conference – "Sufficient" – supporting the bishop's call for a year of grace.

- For 2026, at the bishop's request, CDSF coordinated the production of a similar resource for the current theme "Practicing Hope", significantly expanding the content and including contributions from the Wisconsin Annual Conference reflecting the richness of our shared Episcopal Area.
- Worked with Discipleship Ministries, connecting the work of CDSF in the Annual Conference to denominational projects, emphases, and resources.
- At the request of CCFA, begun development of a resource for local churches linking Discipleship, Stewardship, and our connexional identity as United Methodists.

With gratitude, we offer thanks to God for all those who, loving boldly, serving joyfully, and leading courageously, are faithfully making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world in so many places in Northern Illinois.

400.18 Council on Young People's Ministries (CYPM) Historical Report

Rev. Sharon Rice, Chair

Train children in the way they should go;

when they grow old, they won't depart from it. —Proverbs 22:6 (CEB)

The Council on Young People's Ministry is dedicated to serving the many wonderful ministries that empower the children, youth, and young adults of our conference, as well as equip and strengthen the leaders who are called to serve and guide them on the road of discipleship.

In June of 2025, CYPM worked closely with the leadership of JOY Camp at Camp Reynoldswood. JOY stands for Jesus, Others, & You, and takes to heart the above passage from Proverbs, helping young people grow in faith, both individually and as a community, and have been doing so for 30 years! Camp leadership offered an "open house" for church leaders, and we heard faith-filled stories from counselors, a majority of whom were JOY Camp alumni, who found their camp experience to be transformative and who desired to continue sharing that hope-filled message with the next generation of campers, quite a few of whom expressed a desire to one day become counselors themselves. The open house also provided information on ways in which churches, small groups, and mission teams can support JOY Camp's work, from donating snacks, to volunteering time to help prepare the grounds in the weeks leading up to camp. CYPM is excited to see this ministry continue for hopefully another 30 years and encourages the NIC to seek ways to connect and support JOY Camp's work so that more young people can be trained in the way of Christ.

CYPM continues partnering with the team behind our annual NIC Fall Retreat, going on now for five years. In 2025, the retreat moved to Elkhorn, WI, and continued to provide teens with a moving week-end away, where they could engage in devotions, games, and other fun activities with youth from all around our annual conference. It's important to keep in mind that our youth are sometimes amazed to realize that they are "not alone", that there are other United Methodist young people like them, and this retreat helps them engage with the diverse make-up that is the NIC. We look forward to supporting and sponsoring the Retreat's work as they prepare for 2026.

Finally, CYPM was very proud to see the return of childcare to our Annual Conference gatherings and is grateful for the teamwork with local congregations and volunteers in the Schaumburg area, providing VBS and day-camp activities for the children of our conference members. Such a ministry can be reminder to both kids and parents that they are loved, and their needs matter.

CYPM also sponsored young adult attendees from each district, who shared their faith through prayer at the start and end of our daily plenary sessions. So inspired were we by their witness that in 2026 we look forward to hearing from at least 2 representatives from each district.

CYPM is dedicated to training the way we should go, both for our children, and for our conference.

400.19 Outdoor & Retreat Ministries (ORM) Historical Report

Charles Rea, Chair

Reynoldswood hosted 17 guest groups that could be housed without Manor Right following the 2023 tree fall damage—1,033 unique guests, for a total of 4,139 camper days with 7,703 meals.

Wesley Woods served 78 guest groups with 1,826 unique guests, for a total of 10,822 camper days and 11,293 meals.

Property

Both sites continue to spend about 50% of their budgets and 90% of their staff time on property issues.

We celebrate that the Manor House Roof repairs and paperwork were finally completed in October 2025—we can finally reopen Reynoldswood to new guests in 2026!

- The NIC Board of Trustees sold a small strip of land that was not used for camping to the Dixon Rural Fire Protection District. The Board of Outdoor and Retreat Ministries approved the sale. The land that was sold comprised approximately 16 acres bordering Summit Avenue on the eastern side of the property, from Reynoldswood Road to the river.
- The transaction is a Godsend as staff and the budget have struggled for fourteen (14) years to keep up with drug paraphernalia, vandalism, hunters-poachers, and squatters who constantly enter the camp from Summit Avenue—destroying fences and game cameras in the process.
- The net proceeds of the sale were specifically designated for Outdoor and Retreat Ministries repairs to the camps.

In May of 2025, the Board of Trustees and Annual Conference Shepherding Team did not know how to respond to an unsolicited offer of \$15mm - \$17.5mm (contingencies), to purchase Wesley Woods. To address this confusion, Bishop Schwerin appointed—and participates within—a Camp Ministry Task Force (CMTF), to recommend a longer-term strategy and definitive process moving forward.

While reviewing master plans and Conference minutes back to 1970, the CMTF learned that Conference leadership's historical intent was to consolidate the total number of physical Outdoor and Retreat Ministry sites from five sites (resulting from the 1968 merger of the Methodist and Evangelical United Brethren churches), to one premier, site that would serve more diverse Conference purposes and needs within a sustainable property maintenance budget.

The ACST, CCFA, BOT and ORM are all working together to determine the best path forward to achieve the Conference's Mission, and ORM's self-sufficient, self-sustaining vision adopted in 2013. Please hear their recommendation.

Mission

ORM partners with local congregations to transform and nurture guests and neighbors into principled and passionate Christian disciples.

Vision

ORM envisions itself serving as a self-sufficient, self-sustaining catalyst of transformation and growth for local congregations, conference ministries, and ecumenical partners.

400.20 United Women in Faith Historical Report

Barb Farley, President

United Women in Faith Northern Illinois Conference had a productive and successful year celebrating 157 years of connecting, educating and nurturing women through Christian fellowship, leadership development and education. We are one of the few conferences in this country to offer two different sessions of Mission u each year. Our January session was well attended and offered two different topics presented on Zoom. These sessions were held at different times during January weekdays to accommodate many varied schedules. Beginning and ending worship was combined for all to participate. During our summer session in July, at the Carmelite Spiritual Center, our United Methodist Korean sisters joined us for one day of learning along with Bishop Schwerin and his wife. We also had a one-day Mission u event for Spanish speaking attendees in August.

Practicing Hope, by Tabatha Holley was our summer mission curriculum. Being such a strong and much needed study, our Bishop was moved to declare that 2026 be a year of Practicing Hope of the Beloved Community!

Sally Vonner, General Secretary and CEO United Women in Faith, was our keynote speaker at our UWFaith NIC Annual Meeting in October. She inspired everyone as she addressed our theme, "Love, Our Super Power".

UWFaith NIC Mission giving was recognized by our National United Women in Faith as we contributed 150% of our Mission Giving funds in 2025! We are supporters of an unstoppable sisterhood which strengthens communities, increases advocacy, equips leaders and provides a safety net for those in need.

United Women in Faith NIC strives to educate and advocate for Climate Justice and to interrupt the School-to-Prison Pipeline. We do this work through letter writing, showing up, workshops, Bible studies, our National Reading Program, giving grants, scholarships, and supporting and working at/ with National and International Mission Institutions. Our resources, provided by our funding, such as our Podcasts, Inspirational videos, Response Magazine, and district and conference newsletters help connect and center women for service in the communities in which they live and beyond.

We will continue to strive for more collaboration and sharing within our districts and our conferences. We look forward to doing this when we meet in Indianapolis, Indiana for our UWFaith Assembly 2026 in May!

400.21 United Methodist Men Historical Report

Craig Mc Gregor, President

Welcome to the Northern Illinois Conference United Methodist Men. I hope you find our website (nicumm.org) helpful and informative. If you have questions about Men's Ministry in the United Methodist Church, feel free to email me at (craigscottmcgregor@gmail.com).

Craig McGregor, NICUMM Conference President
(630) 346-2239

The year 2025 had the NICUMM continuing to recover from the COVID shutdowns within our new districts organization while reaching out in ministry and mission to help others to know and grow in Christ. At the NICUMM Lenten annual meeting hosted by Lake South District. Craig Mc Gregor introduced NICUMM Executive Committee team. They were Craig Mc Gregor, Conference President; Dave Hilton, Conference Vice President; David Holland, Conference Secretary; Eugene Williams, Conference Treasurer; Herb John, Conference Prayer Advocate; and Jim Loeppert, Conference Scouting Coordinator. The non-elected officers for the NICUMM Executive Committee are John Maxson, Prairie Central District President; Jim Simmons, Lake South District President; Bob Garvens, Prairie North District President; and Jim Nelson, Member At Large. Dave Holland talked about EMS, Legacy Builders, and Charters.

George Groves shared United Methodist Men future plans for the NCJUMM/NACP/GCUMM and talked about “Men’s Ministries Revival” programs. He stated we are in the servant/leader/disciple-making business! He talked about revival and some of the things we are doing in the UMM. Lastly, Jim Loopert gave us a scouting update report.

Our Spiritual Congress and our mission efforts continue to be focal points for our men. The topic of Spiritual Congress 2025 was “Forged by Grace – Forging men in your church and around the world”. Our keynote speaker was Bishop James Edward Swanson, SR., who served as the president of the General Commission on UMM and recently the Interim General Secretary of GCUMM. He is a sought-after preacher, worship leader and lecturer. He has presented to people throughout the U.S. and around the world. The other noted speakers for the weekend included:

- (1) Rev. Dr. Norval Brown (Pastoring at Cary United Methodist Church in Cary, Illinois). He brings gifts in spiritual formation to church as he is called to lead retreats, revivals, and to provide individual direction.
- (2) Rev. Dr. Audrea F. Nanabray (Superintendent of the Lake South District for NIC). She has served the NIC as a Safe Sanctuaries Trainer, helping churches keep children and vulnerable adults safe from exploitation.
- (3) Rev. Dr. Char Hoffman (Retired Elder serving part-time at Hebron United Methodist Church in Hebron, Illinois). She noticed that it was difficult for the men to open up and share the way the women are able to in a group. She has been able to engage men in God’s transformation at work in their lives.
- (4) Rev. Dr. Richard “Rick” Vance the new General Secretary of the GCUMM. (Prior to becoming General Secretary, Rick served as Director of Operations and Director of the Center for Men’s Ministries at GCUMM.) His calling is simple and powerful, to help men grow in Christ, build authentic relationships, and live lives of faithful service.
- (5) Rev. Mark Lubbock (Executive Director United Methodist Men Foundation). He firmly believes “everything I do is from the viewpoint of a servant of Jesus”. Says Lubbock. “I am deeply passionate about fostering men’s discipleship, interfaith, and driving sustainable impact in alignment with the core values of United Methodist Foundation”.

(6) Mr. Paul Dreiske (Member of the First Church in Crystal Lake). Since his retirement in 2015, Paul has faithfully immersed himself in music and Biblical Studies, actively serving, supporting, and teaching Men’s Ministries. He gave a presentation about “Grace” from the church pew perspective.

Friday night was movie night. The Christian movie shown was “The Forge”. It was received well and prompted great discussions. On Saturday morning the Jean Bush Award was presented to Rev. Dr. Char Hoffman, and the John Wesley Award was presented to Herb John. This year for the first time on Saturday afternoon at Conference Point, the men had an opportunity to do a service project involving packing dry meals to be distributed worldwide. The materials needed to package the meals were provide by the Midwest Mission Distribution Center. We put together 320 meals in an hour and half. On Saturday night the “Four Heaven’s Sake” quartet from Crystal Lake UMC performed for us.

Over the last few years, GCUMM/NACP has launched a new brand and website at UnitedMensMinistry.com and many men are now starting to use the “United” app.

Conference and District activities are reaching men for Christ. Here are some of our 2025 highlights for the conference activities as well as for the activities that were common to all districts:

- The Conference and District UMM are having in-person meetings as well as some ZOOM and livestreamed meetings.
- Created the new 2024-2028 plan of work for the NICUMM, with major changes to the previous (2018-2021) working plan.
- Held the 64th Spiritual Congress at Williams Bay, WI in September.
- At our December NICUMM Executive meeting, it was decided that in 2026 that the NICUMM and the Boy Scouts of America would have a joint NIC Scouts Circuit Rider event in the Midwest for the first time.

- Men's Ministry Specialist (MMS): NICUMM have four men certified as an MMS.
- EMS/Legacy Builders & Charters were a major emphasis to invite men to become involved in Men's Ministry, especially those with elapsed memberships.
- Meals for Millions/Society of St. Andrew (SOSA) continues as our major Mission Program, and the NIC was recognized again as the 2024 Top Conference for donations to SOSA.
- Scouting Ministries Programs and reaching out to younger men and women. The United Methodist Men supports, with National Memorandums of Understanding, Boy Scouts of America, Girl Scouts of the United States of America, and Big Brothers / Big Sisters. As the BSA was working toward a settlement of its bankruptcy case, our Conference Scouting Coordinator, Jim Loeppert, worked to develop a new relationship with Scouting and other youth-serving organizations, one that could still involve our churches in serving the youth and young adults in our communities. We developed a Small, Single-Purpose Community Corporation (SSPCC) as a Not-For-Profit (NFP) corporation. This corporation would charter 3 to 10 units from various churches and sign Facilities Use Agreements for meeting space and storage with the individual church.
- The Conference Prayer Advocate is working with the District Presidents to establish district Prayer Advocates in the effort to build a team to establish Prayer Advocates in churches. We have reached the point of realizing that helping men learn to pray and to seek to become a disciple of Jesus, is every man's responsibility and not the province of a special few. The Mighty Men of Prayer small group study is being pursued by men in the conference.
- At Spiritual Congress 2025, Rev. Dr. Hoffman, NIC UMM Clergy Representative, received the Jean Bush Award for leadership in local men's ministry. Her UMM members were present for the awards ceremony.
- At Spiritual Congress 2025, Herb John, NIC UMM Prayer Advocate, received the John Wesley Award for leadership in conference wide men's ministry. His family members were present at the awards ceremony.

Lake South District Report: President, Jim Simmons, as of 1/19/26

The District UMM Executive Committee is as follows: President, Jim Simmons; Vice-President, Verner Geddes; Financial Secretary, Tommy Taylor; Treasurer, Bernard Brantley; Recording Secretary, Juan McKinney; Sergeant-at-Arms, John Burrel; Parliamentarian, Vernon (Scoop) Turner; Prayer Advocate, Charles Smith; Scouting Coordinator, Vacant; Hunger Advocate, Vacant.

- A Wednesday evening Bible Study Program was provided for the District from January thru May and continues from September thru the third week of December.
- A District Celebration Dinner Event was held on June 7th to Honor three Men and one Women for their Service to their churches and communities in the district. Included was a celebration of 33 years for the Bible Study Program to the Men of the District.
- 7 District meetings including the Celebration event were held in 2025.
- 10 churches have active United Methodist Men Chartered Units in the district with an additional 6 churches with nonactive Charters. This was a reduction of one nonactive Unit from last year's report because of church closings.
- 44 Men have active EMS memberships in the district with an additional 8 Men with nonactive EMS memberships. This was a reduction of eight active and two nonactive memberships from last year's report because of church closings.
- 15 Men represented the district at the Northern Illinois Conference UMM Annual meeting and Communion Service at UMC of New Lenox in March.

- 12 Men represented the district at the Northern Illinois Conference UMM Spiritual Congress at Williams Bay, WI in September.
- Special Events were held in October with a Potato Drop sponsored by the New Lenox Men and a presentation by the Alleluia Quartet in November at Morgan Park UMC.

Prairie Central District Report: President, John Maxson, as of 1/15/26

The district has 11 chartered churches and 27 EMS members. The emphasis this year was on improving communications and strengthening value to members. We worked to build the database, leverage district communication resources by working with the District Superintendent and her staff and implement innovative ideas. We also built on last year's programming to attract the interest of members and non-members. For more information about this report and the events, please contact John Maxson (312-933-3239).

UMM Communications Initiative: One Man, One Church

With men being flooded with text, email, U.S. Mail, screen displays, and other visual messages, it is hard to break through the clutter and inform men about opportunities for men's ministry. With word of mouth being the most effective vehicle, Prairie Central District men have worked to identify one man in each of our 57 churches willing to read electronic media and ensure that the proper clergy and laity in his church receives the information. This single person commits to being the catalyst in his congregation to make sure that the word gets out. These "one man" messengers have been identified in about half of our churches, a goal for 2026 being to identify the remainder.

District UMM Meeting and Advent Service

Prairie Central District men celebrated the season of Advent with a service on Saturday morning, December 13, 2025, at the Barrington United Methodist Church, 98 Algonquin Road, Barrington Hills. The morning started with a hearty breakfast, a district business meeting featuring NIC-UMM President Craig McGregor and other announcements, and an inspirational service themed ADVENT ROAD: MEN ON A JOURNEY designed specifically for this constituency by Pastor David Lagos-Fonseca.

District Leadership Event

Prairie Central District United Methodist Men are playing an active role in organizing and promoting the District Leadership Training event scheduled for January 31, 2026, at Grace United Methodist Church in Schaumburg. Spearheaded by District Superintendent Wendy Hardin-Herrmann, activities will explore the meaning of church culture as outlined in the book by Jim Ozier titled Church Culture: How to Assess It, Shift It, and Shape It. According to Mr. Ozier, culture is the principal determinant of a church's success and is independent of church size, demographics, and the socio-economic profile of the community. He will be at the conference leading the discussion.

Prairie North District: President, Bob Garvens, as of 01/20/26

The District UMM Executive Committee is as follows: President, Bob Garvens; Vice President, Dave Hilton; Secretary, Dave Holland; Treasurer, Michael Simmons; Scouting Advocate, Roman Salamon; Hunger Advocate, Vacant; Prayer Advocate, Vacant.

- On March 1, the Prairie North District had its Spring Communion and worship service
- Hosted by Harmony UMC at Freeport, with approximately 55 people attending. Our guest speaker was Harmony UMC pastor, Rev. Eddie Eddy.
- On March 22, 2024, a couple of the district men attended the NICUMM annual meeting at New Lennox.

- The district hosted a night out at the minor league Beloit Sky Carp game at ABC Stadium in Beloit on August 13. This was a new event with a goal to gather the district during the summer months for fellowship and fun. We were pleased to have about 95 people in attendance and plan to repeat in 2026 with the benefit of experience from the first time.
- On Sept. 13-15, some of the District men attended Spiritual Congress in Conference Point, Williams Bay WI.
- On November 8, Grace UMC hosted the District Fall Communion Service. The guest speaker was Rev Jane Easley. There were about 80 people in attendance. The offering raised \$5,355.10 for the Society of St Andrew Meals for Millions (MFM) program and \$280 for the Northwest IL Food Bank.
- The district has 6 Chartered churches and 10 EMS members.

Lake North District: President, Open

- The district has 6 Chartered churches and 6 EMS members.
- The Lake North District has no district UMM officers.

Prairie South District: President, Open

- The district has 7 Chartered churches and 4 EMS members.
- Continued to provide hunger relief through various pantries and gleaned sweet corn, and countless garden vegetables.

Closing Remarks: With the Covid shutdown of our churches in March of 2020, most of our Men's events that were based on meetings, fellowship and/or group missions were put on hold at our local churches. During this time many church charters and EMS memberships lapsed. Men have dropped away from the UMM organizations and our churches. In 2022 and 2023, our churches got back to normal, however many of our UMM units lost momentum, leadership, and members. For 2023 we worked to reestablish, renew, and/or replace our men's ministries with the use of the new Men's Ministry products. For 2024 the official disaffiliation of churches from the main body of United Methodist Church has caused men to be concerned about the future of United Methodist Men. In response, the churches and UMM groups are working on ways to revitalize and to create new possibilities and new hope for new ministries that truly reach out to the local communities.

400.22 2026 PATH (Planting And Thriving) Team Historical Report

Rev. Jonathan Crail, Chair

In collaboration with the Director of Congregational Development, Rev. Christian Coon, a group of clergy and laity come together to support the work of creating new faith communities, helping existing congregations to reverse decline and move toward vitality and thriving, and finding new and creative ways to make disciples of Jesus Christ in a fast-changing world.

In the past year, we renamed and rearranged our Committee on Congregational Development and Re-development (Code Red) into the PATH (Planting And Thriving) Team. We divided that team into three subteams: Revitalization, Planting, and Innovation. Here is some of the work we have done:

Revitalization: We have developed a new revitalization process that will give churches a snapshot of their current health and a roadmap to help them flourish. Church leaders begin by taking an online assessment that will put them in one of four tiers. From there, a church will be assigned two trained "Remissioning Guides" to help guide them to greater health. We spent this past year training our guides, developing the online assessment and having a few churches try the assessment out. We are now ready to have several churches test this process out this next year as we see what works and what still needs to be improved. We hope to unveil this process for the whole conference next year.

Planting: We are introducing a new planting system to identify potential planters, assess gifts and graces, offer training to planters who are assessed to be planters, and then organize a cohort so they stay connected. In addition, planters will have quarterly meetings with conference leaders to check in on metrics and goals. This past year, officially launched two new communities of faith: Free Recovery Community Church in Chicago (led by Seth Botts) and Table of Grace Church in Rockford (led by Violet Johnicker). Our plan is to launch two more new faith communities in the coming year. The planting subteam of PATH will be focusing on these areas: recruit more planters, including individuals outside of our conference; discern potential areas and people groups for plants; and assess our current closed churches for possible relaunch possibilities.

Innovation: We are excited to follow the bishop's call to innovate and are particularly excited about Kenda Creasy Dean as the featured speaker at the School for Leadership in late September. Dr. Dean is the author of many books, including "Innovating for Love" and will guide our leaders introducing innovation in our contexts. We also kicked off our intentional work around Fresh Expressions this past year with Michael Beck, the Director of FX for the United Methodist Church. We have had workshops and monthly calls with Michael to help churches experiment with "mini-plants" in their communities.

The PATH Team would love to have your input and ideas, and we have openings to serve on any of our sub-teams. Help us to plant new churches, revitalize current congregations, and experiment with innovative ways to connect people with Christ!

Reach out to Rev. Christian Coon or Rev. Jonathan Crail.

400.23 Conference Committee on Accessibility Ministries Historical Report

Christina Crusius and Alexander Dungan, Co-Chairs

The NIC Committee on Accessibility Ministries supports local churches in making their buildings and congregations more welcoming to people of all abilities. We do this by awarding annual grants to churches working on accessibility projects, consulting with congregations exploring improvements and connecting them with resources, hosting workshops on accessibility topics, focusing on neurodiversity and authentic welcome and inclusion of people living with mental illness, coordinating information about accessible churches and parsonages, and advocating for fully physically accessible buildings. When churches request our services, committee members visit a church and meet with the pastor, trustees' chair, and/or other interested people. We complete an assessment for them of accessibility issues and work to recommend possibilities for improvement based on the national UMC Committee on Disability Ministries audit. The majority of our budget each year goes to grants for specific projects we have endorsed, such as making areas accessible for people in wheelchairs or with limited mobility, adding equipment for people with visual or hearing impairments to assist them in fully participating in worship, or purchasing products such as large print hymnals. Our grants only ever fund a portion of the project – the local church and other funding entities cover the rest.

In 2025, we were able to provide grants to help purchase hearing loop devices for worship services to assist those who are hard of hearing while advising different churches on ways to encourage accessibility while spending less money. We recognized that many projects necessary for full accessibility were unaffordable, even with grant money. In these instances, it is important to analyze how volunteers and staff at the church can help to provide accessible opportunities in lieu of adapting physical building structures.

Christina Crusius and Alexander Dungan have since stepped up as co-chairs and we have done our best to reformat the grant application system so that we are able to receive the applications more easily and can begin the grant application process anew through a different platform. In 2026, we also plan to host an educational summit that covers a wide array of topics in accessibility for church leaders to bring back to their congregations.

We look forward to further equipping congregations for accessibility in the coming year through consultations, grants, and educational opportunities.

400.24 Keagy Town and Rural Committee Historical Report

Rev. Libby Rutherford, Chair

The Northern Illinois Conference offers two grants that are funded by a generous bequest from Martin Keagy, who had a big heart for small-town and rural churches. Every year the interest from this bequest funds two grants:

The PACK (Planned Act of Christian Kindness) Grant is meant to support churches' work to be a blessing to those in the neighboring community to show them the love of Jesus Christ. Awards range from \$100 to \$500.

The Keagy Grant is for larger ministry projects that benefit the community and strengthen the church through evangelism, discipleship, justice, and compassion. Awards range from \$500 to \$5000.

The Keagy Committee was pleased to award \$37,370 in Keagy Grants, and \$9150 in PACK grants, to a total of 29 different small town and rural churches. The churches gathered on November 8, 2025 at Dixon Grace to present their ministries that the grants funded, and network with one another to share ministry ideas.

The Keagy Committee is comprised of Rev. Mel Alagodi, Rev. Dr. Hwa-Young Chong, Rev. Brian Gilbert, Ann Hecathorn, Rev. Rosa Lee, Rev. Toni Lucas, Bob Oorlong, Rev. Jeremiah Thompson, David Saam, and is chaired by Rev. Libby Rutherford. This committee takes great care in reviewing all the grant applications and planning the Town & Rural Festival each year.

These grants open each year around January 2, and applications are closed on March 31. They can be found posted on the Conference website.

400.25 Committee on Church and Society Historical Report

Rev. Rachel Birkhahn-Rommelfanger, Chair

Over the past year, the Committee on Church and Society continued its work of equipping congregations in the Northern Illinois Conference to engage in ministries of peace, justice, and the dismantling of systemic inequalities. Building on the previous year's rebuilding work, the committee remained focused on grants, advocacy, immigration justice, and strengthening connections across the conference.

A central part of our work remained the Church and Society grants program, which continued to support local churches and ministries engaged in justice-focused and community-building work across the conference. The committee also continued exploring ways to make this work more visible and accessible to more congregations.

Immigration justice was an important area of attention this year. This work was shaped by increased immigration enforcement activity in the Chicago area in fall 2025, including a visible escalation of federal presence and enforcement actions that prompted protests, legal response, and community organizing across the city. One member of the committee participated in a national public witness for immigrant justice in Washington, D.C., connecting with other United Methodist clergy and laity from across the country. We also attempted, though were not able to complete, a video with United Methodist Communications connected to immigration raids in Chicago. Justice for Our Neighbors was also supported as part of our ongoing commitment to immigrant communities. We pray for many of the member of our conference who were active in Rapid Response effort and were grateful for all the leaders who emerged to support that work. We also helped connect leaders within the Northern Illinois Conference to advocacy efforts calling on corporate leadership to reconsider policies related to cooperation with immigration enforcement. This included engagement with a member of a Target corporate board of directors, with representation from the Episcopal office present in that effort.

The committee continued its advocacy work at the state level. For the second year in a row, we supported a Springfield lobby day led by Conference Commission on Religion and Race in partnership with Illinois Great Rivers. We helped prepare participants through training in advance on how to do a visit. This strengthen our capacity for coordinated, faith-based advocacy.

We also supported broader connectional efforts. The committee is preparing to support a jurisdiction-wide advocacy event this July that is expected to come to Northern Illinois and bring together participants from across the region to do similar events to our Springfield lobby day.

Looking ahead, we plan to offer our grants again, continue strengthening partnerships, and help connect more churches across the conference to justice and advocacy work. We remain committed to supporting congregations as they live out the gospel through ministries of justice, mercy, and hope.

400.26 Conference Board of Global Ministries Historical Report

Rev. Shirley Pulgar Hughes, Global Ministries Secretary

The year 2025 was a remarkably fruitful one for Global Ministries. We continue our work under the leadership of our chair, Rev. Ayla Samson. Her deep passion for mission and love for the Church continue to guide our work with clarity and vision.

Our virtual itineration program continued to thrive, connecting churches and missionaries through meaningful online gatherings. Through smaller sessions and the monthly #STILLINMISSION Zoom event, congregations have been able to hear firsthand about the calling, challenges, and daily lives of United Methodist missionaries.

We are grateful for the generosity of churches and individuals across the Northern Illinois Conference, who raised \$119,519 for the 2025 Bishop's Appeal for Innovative Outreach. In his episcopal address, Bishop Dan Schwerin reminded us that trusting in God's grace calls us to bold, even risky, new ways of reaching people. He also shared that he and his wife, Julie, will donate half of his salary increase to this appeal and the other half to the Wisconsin Conference's partnership with Bolivia.

We also celebrate an extraordinary response to the Mission Challenge supporting the Midwest Mission Distribution Center. About 70 churches contributed over \$1,000 each, along with more than 4,000 pounds of donated goods. These gifts, ranging from medical supplies to large items like an ambulance and fire truck, help bring hope to communities facing disaster, war, and economic hardship.

This past year, we were blessed to welcome several missionaries from Global Ministries to itenerate throughout our conference, sharing their stories and deepening our connection to God's work around the world.

Dexter Ceballos, serving in Mongolia, Guillermo Berman, serving in Mexico, Christina Kim, serving in Tanzania, and Rev. Jonathan McCurley, serving in Japan, each brought unique perspectives on mission and ministry. Through their itineration, they shared the joys and challenges of their calling, highlighting the tangible ways they serve communities, whether through education, humanitarian aid, spiritual leadership, or advocacy.

These visits allow local churches to engage directly with missionaries, ask questions about their ministries, and be inspired by the diverse ways the Church is living out God's mission across cultures and continents. By itinerating in our conference, they strengthen the bonds between our congregations and the global United Methodist mission, encouraging us all to participate in God's work beyond our own communities

At our Mission Link Luncheon, we heard from inspiring leaders making a global impact. Newly elected Bishop Ronny Pulgar Hughes of the Methodist Church of Chile, shared about ministry in the remote region of Patagonia, Chile. Chantel Corrie spoke about the life-changing work of disaster relief through Midwest Mission. We were also blessed by Barbara Farley, who lifted up the faithful and transfor-

mative work of United Women in Faith, whose commitment continues to nurture leaders and support women, children, and youth.

This year, we also reviewed the projects featured in the Mission Link: Living the Beatitudes booklet to ensure our efforts remain aligned with our mission and responsive to real needs.

The Mission Links Awards honored congregations whose generosity extends far beyond their walls. This past year we presented Kingswood United Methodist Church in Buffalo Grove, the Philip Otterbein Award for the highest total giving to Missions, and Good Shepherd UMC in Oswego received the John Wesley Award for the highest giving per member. We give thanks for both of these congregations, whose dedication, faithfulness, and generosity continue to make a meaningful difference in the lives of many. Their example encourages us all to grow in our commitment to God's mission.

Together, the board remains steadfast in its passion for mission, building connections near and far and faithfully serving Christ through our work in the Northern Illinois Conference.

400.27 Commission on Christian Unity and Interreligious Relations

Historical Report

Rev. Hyewon Sophia Carno, Chair

CIOGC- UMC NIC (Methodist-Muslim) Dinners - Catiana McKay and Lynn Pries assisted with planning the 2025 Iftar Methodist -Muslim Dinner at the Islamic Foundation of Villa Park (300 Highbridge Rd, Villa Park, IL) on March 11, 2025. Rev. Fabiola Grandon-Mayer coordinated publicity and registration of United Methodists for the event. The Council of Islamic Organizations of Greater Chicago coordinated this event. Rev. Jane Easley was one of the speakers. Rev. Easley was serving as the Board of Global Ministries Liaison Officer in Jerusalem at the time.

Sophia Carno, Catiana McKay and Lynn Pries assisted with planning the 2025 fall Methodist-Muslim Dinner, which was held at the Journey of Hope United Methodist Church, 37W040 Highland Ave. Elgin, IL, on Tuesday, November 11, 2025. Rev. Fabiola Grandon-Mayer prepared a flyer, coordinated publicity, supervised registration of United Methodists for the event, and recruited one of the speakers, Claudia Marchan, JFON Exec. Director.. Bishop Dan Schwerin and Rev. Jane Easley participated in the program. The theme was "United in Solidarity and Peace." Both events drew about 50 United Methodists from the NIC and about 50 Muslims from the Chicago Area.

Sophie Carno, Eunbae Doh, Noemi Meza, Catiana McKay, and Lynn Pries attended the 2025 National Workshop on Christian Unity. The National Workshop on Christian Unity (NWCU) met Monday, September 8, through Wednesday, September 10, at the Lutheran Center in Chicago

The United Methodist Ecumenical Interreligious Training (UMEIT) was held on Monday, September 8th of the NWCU. Networks of participant communions are traditionally held on the first day of each NWCU, followed by joint opening worship that evening.

The United Methodist Ecumenical Interreligious Training (UMEIT) holds monthly Zoom meetings. Lynn Pries attended these one-half-hour informational meetings organized by the Ecumenical and Interreligious Office of the Council of Bishops. Others have joined occasionally.

The Illinois Conference of Churches connected their yearly Assembly to the location and close of the NWCU September 11th in Chicago. This meeting focused on re-organizing a more visual and connected ICC. This would include a broader Lobby Day in Springfield, and other ICC initiatives including joint gatherings of AME and UMC to highlight issues on Racism and the Safety Net, among other issues with our legislators and state constitutional officers. There was an extensive discussion of various technology options for increasing the awareness of the ICC activities and their influence on issues of concern. Catiana McKay, Lynn Pries, and Danita Anderson have attended the Illinois Council of Churches Executive Board's monthly meetings.

Ecumenical Metro Chicago continued their focus on the “Care of Creation Declaration,” which was signed by thirteen denominational executives at the Parliament of World Religions, by planning a “Week of Christian United Worship service on January 28, 2026, in which the same denominational executives would sign a document advocating for the US to rejoin the “Paris Agreement” to address climate change.

Lynn Pries attended the Spring Lobby Day in Springfield with the Racial Justice Taskforce and the Commission on Religion and Race and met with the Illinois Council of Churches to publicize the event.

400.28 Conference Commission on Religion and Race (CCORR) Historical Report

Nadia Kanhai and Tim Alexander, Co-Chairs

Executive Summary

In 2025-2026, CCORR intensified its impact through strategic partnerships with the Champion Team, Advocacy Partners, BRIDGE Interreligious Alliance, and the Becoming the Beloved Community training team. Key efforts focused on legislative advocacy, racial justice education, and securing foundational grants for clergy training.

Key Initiatives & Events

- 2026 Illinois Pilgrimage: Extensive planning was accomplished for the June 2026 event, which focuses on historical racial injustices affecting people of color and accomplishments achieved.
- MLK Celebration: Partnered with Black Methodists for Church Renewal for the annual event at Trinity UMC (Mt. Prospect), featuring Rev. Dr. Charles Woolery, Sr. The hybrid event reached over 300 attendees.
- Indigenous Relations: Sponsored a Native American Heritage Month event in LaSalle, IL, in collaboration with Committee on Native American Ministries.
- Annual Conference Presence: Hosted a “Lunch and Learn” and informational outreach at the 2025 Annual Conference.

Advocacy & Justice (Advocacy Partners)

Led by Lisa Rogers, this team addressed systemic inequities through:

- Springfield Lobby Day: Advocated for environmental justice (Green Space), migrant support, and ending the “School to Prison Pipeline.”
- Community Health: Launched HEAL Well, focusing on community gardens and reforestation in Chicago's West Side.
- Migrant Support: Conducted “Immigration 101” and “Know Your Rights” sessions and provided emergency financial aid to international students at Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary.
- Interfaith Solidarity: Collaborated with the BRIDGE Interreligious Alliance to build anti-racism networks across diverse faith traditions.

Training & Grants

- CC/CR Standardized Training: Collaborated with members of the North Central Jurisdiction to apply for and receive a grant to standardize training for Cross-Racial/Cross-Cultural pastors.
- NIC Pastor Grants: Collaborated with the Director of Connectional Ministries to reinstate training grants for NIC pastors in CC/CR appointments.
- Beloved Community Workshops: Led by Dr. Richard Guzman, these sessions provided actionable steps to align church life with the conviction that racism is incompatible with Christian teaching.

400.29 Conference Commission on the Status and Role of Women Historical Report

Rita L. Simpkins Smith, Chair

This committee, the Commission on the Status and Role of Women (COSROW), has met quarterly this year. We formulated programs and projects to perform this year and have successfully achieved the goals. They were as follows:

1. A salary data project began in 2025 headed by Kathy Tiffin. Approximately 41% (117) of the 286 clergy (elders, deacons, local pastors, associate and affiliate members) are female. Female pastors head some of the largest churches in the conference and two of the larger churches are led by women of color. These females also have some of the highest salaries commensurate with these larger churches. Further analysis is ongoing.
2. A Bible study group is being planned.
3. Monitored at the 2025 Annual Conference
4. Participated virtually at the 70th session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW70) session at the United Nations. The 70th Session took place in New York March 9-20, 2026. This is the largest global women's conference, bringing together thousands of participants to discuss gender equality, women's empowerment, education, healthcare, climate change and social justice issues. The session focused on the priority theme of ensuring and strengthening access to justice for all women and girls, including promoting inclusive equitable legal systems, eliminating discriminatory laws, policies, and practice, and addressing structural barriers. The review theme was for all women on full and effective participation and decision-making in public life, as well as the elimination of violence for achieving gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls. Attendance was not as anticipated due to problems receiving visas because the political climate.
5. A new Monitoring Toolkit was designed to support its mandate to serve as a monitor of the programmatic and administrative functions of the United Methodist Church.
6. In 2026, we will celebrate the 70th Anniversary of female ordination. Resources are available. During Annual Conference, we will show a video, host a display table, provide an ad in the program booklet, and highlight the 70th Celebration. In addition, over 120 women from the Northern Illinois Conference are planning to go to the United Women in Faith Assembly in Indianapolis, IN in May 2026.

Committee Members: Rita L. Smith, Chair, Xiomara Aragon-Castro, Kathy Tiffin, Annie Gonzalez, Peg Isaacson, Juyeon Jeon, and Rosa Lee Gratefully assisted by Director of Connectional Ministries, Rev. Fabiola Grandon-Mayer and Project Manager, Amania Drane.

400.30 Conference Committee on Native American Ministries Historical Report

Rev. Dr. Michelle Oberwise Lacock, Chair

Our Native American Ministry of Presence served the community through Bill Buchholtz who coordinates this ministry. He provided an inspiring ministry through his music throughout Northern Illinois. His ministry has been with the St. Kateri Center, the American Indian Center, the Indian Health Service, the American Indian Association of Illinois (AIAI), Gichigamiin Indigenous Nations Museum, local UMC churches for worship services and for funeral services, including Jane Goodall's funeral. He played for Midwest SOARRING (Save Our Ancestor's Remains) PowWow, performed at U of I Champaign, Aurora University for a special program, Illinois Central College, for International Peace Day, at the Peace School of Chicago and in many other presentations.

We have partnered with the NCJ Jurisdictional CONAM to sponsor facilitator training for the KAIROS training on the blanket exercise. It is our plan to participate in the training so that we can then take the training to the local churches in NIC. This simulation exercise is an interactive and experiential teaching tool that explores the historic and contemporary relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples in the land we now know as United States. Once trained we plan on having sessions both via ZOOM and in person events.

We sponsored a scholarship for Native American college students who are part of the American Indian Association of Illinois, (AIAI) an urban-based nonprofit dedicated to transforming American Indian education. Assisted Midwest SOARRING (Save Our Ancestor's Remains) PowWow both financially and by being in attendance. The committee members promoted Native American Ministry Sunday in their local churches as well as participated or led services throughout the annual conference. We also participated in the monthly NCJ CONAM committee meetings where we partnered with a variety of activities that are happening in NCJ. We have also been partnering with the Illinois Pilgrimage which will be happening this summer, which we hope you will attend.

"Friend do it this way-that is, whatever you do in life, do the very best you can with both your heart and minds. And if you do it that way, the Power of the Universe will come to your assistance, if your heart and mind are in Unity. When one sits in the Hoop Of The People, one must be responsible because All of Creation is related. And the Hurt of one is the hurt of all. And the honor of one is the honor of all. And whatever we do effects everything in the universe. If you do it that way-that is, if you truly join your heart and mind as One-whatever you ask for, that the Way it's Going to be." Lakota Instructions for Living passed down from White Buffalo Calf Woman

400.31 Creation Care Committee Historical Report

Rev. Harriette Cross, Chairperson

This year we celebrate the 2024 Annual Conference vote for us to move from being a task force to a committee. This has allowed us to be more intentional in our care for Mother Earth. We changed our name from the NetZero Task Force to the Creation Care Committee. The name change allows us to expand our mission and focus. Over the last year we have done some work on developing a mission statement and organizational structure.

Here are some Highlights of the year

- The initial committee members are Harriette Cross, chairperson; Richard Alton, Nancy Blade, Carolyn Burnham, Debbie Buscato, Maureen Stillman, Don Lowmiller, Carol Lowmiller. We are still working to have more members that are representative of all the districts of the conference.
- The Creation Care Summit held on May 2nd at First United Methodist Church of Arlington Heights. The keynote speaker was Grace Hubbard, the Director of Creation Care for the New England Conference. The summit also had workshops on creation care topics for congregations and homes.
- We submitted a resolution to Annual Conference, asking each congregation to be intentional about having an educational event on creation care
- We have started to organize the congregational creation care advocates
- We support the jurisdictional creation justice movement. They will meet at Garrett Evangelical Seminary in July, we will provide support and allow participants to visit churches in the conference working on green efforts.
- We provided information tables at the Laity Convocation and other events.
- We continue to resource congregations in starting green teams and in getting information to install solar panels.

In the future we will continue to help the conference in its efforts to have a zero footprint in 2050. In November of 2025, the Council of Bishops wrote an open letter to the people of the United Methodist Church in response to the UM Creation Justice Movement. In the letter the bishops stated that Christians have been called to care for creation, and that this is a critical time in history for creation

justice. In the letter the bishops invited congregations and conferences to do 4 things: 1. Create Green Teams in each local church/ministry. 2. Organize one church-wide action around creation care at least once a year. 3. Study together for deeper understanding of the work of creation care and Justice. 4. Engage with partners in the Ecumenical Decade for Climate Justice Action.

It is the goal of our committee to help the Northern Illinois Conference to do those things.

400.32 United Voices for Children (UVC) Historical Report

Rev. Abby Holcombe, President

“United Voices for Children is a coalition of groups and individuals within the Northern Illinois Conference of The United Methodist Church, dedicated to speaking and acting on behalf of children, youth, and their families, while supporting ministries across the Conference. In serving children and youth in the Chicagoland area and beyond, we believe kids are at the heart of who we are.”

The Program Ministries of the Northern Illinois Conference (NIC) include committees, boards, agencies, and task forces that extend the mission of the conference. United Voices for Children (UVC) serves as a coalition of congregations, agencies, and individuals advocating for children, youth, and families across Northern Illinois.

UVC partners with affiliated agencies—Kids Above All (formerly ChildServ), MYSI Corporation, and Rosecrance Health Network—and collaborates with its policy partner, Children's Advocates for Change, to strengthen advocacy and support systems for children and families.

In 2025, UVC focused on Youth Mental Health and Accessibility, developing training and advocacy initiatives to equip clergy, laity, and community leaders. These efforts emphasized protecting essential services for children experiencing trauma, anxiety, depression, food insecurity, and housing instability, while promoting early intervention and coordinated care in schools and communities.

A key event was the Youth and Mental Health Advocacy Training for Greater Action & Impact held on February 10, 2025. This training brought together clergy, educators, mental health professionals, and community advocates. Children's Advocates for Change provided guidance on legislative advocacy, effective messaging, and engagement with elected officials. Featured speakers included Sara Gray (NAMI Executive Director), State Senator Laura Fine, State Representative Anna Moeller, and Tasha Cruzat, President of Children's Advocates for Change.

On September 18, 2025, UVC hosted Raising Our Voices at Community United Methodist Church in Naperville, Illinois, focusing on youth mental health. The event included a performance by About Face Theatre, presentation of the Child Advocate Awards by Rev. Wendy Hardin Hermann, and legislative updates from Children's Advocates for Change.

March 2025 marked five years since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, offering a moment for reflection on the resilience of children, families, and congregations. UVC reaffirmed its commitment to healing, mental health, and holistic support for youth.

Throughout the year, UVC maintained consistent communication through NIC eNews and social media. These platforms promoted events, shared advocacy priorities, and highlighted the Fifth Sunday Appeal, encouraging congregations to support affiliated agencies and demonstrating the impact of these contributions. End-of-year communications expressed gratitude to volunteers, clergy, and partners whose dedication sustains this work.

Looking ahead to 2026, UVC will continue to build on this momentum through initiatives such as Addressing Youth Mental Health Matters (March 2026) and Springfield Advocacy Day (April 2026). The Fifth Sunday Appeal will remain a key source of support for affiliated agencies and their work with children and youth.

UVC's accomplishments in 2025 reflect the commitment and collaboration of volunteers, clergy, agency partners, and advocates across the Northern Illinois Conference.

Thank you to all who continue to support and advocate for the well-being of children and families.

400.33 Immigration Law and Justice of Northern Illinois (ILJNI) Historical Report

Claudia Marchan, Executive Director

The Immigration Law and Justice of Northern Illinois (ILJNI), formally Northern Illinois Justice for Our Neighbors, continues to live out its mission to provide free high quality immigration legal services, engage in education and advocacy on immigrant rights and build cross cultural communities. Rooted in the UMC and moved by our faith to welcome immigrants NIJFON now includes more partners and organizations reflected in our new name Immigration Law and Justice Network of Northern Illinois (ILJNI). We continue to welcome people of all backgrounds and faiths who seek our services.

2025 was a challenging and heartbreaking year for many, particularly for many vulnerable communities which include immigrant communities. In 2025 we were challenged, and continue to be challenged, for many of the basic liberties and protections that many immigrants and many vulnerable people have sought. Due process rights are being stripped away, birthright citizenship, a constitutional right, is being challenged, countries are banned and immigrants waiting for immigration benefits from those countries are being denied, departments that provide critical services for vulnerable communities are being gutted and the most vulnerable are being directly attacked.

At ILJNI it has been harder to serve the most vulnerable because their rights, benefits and protections are disappearing. Our staff must keep a close eye on the ever-changing policies and executive orders that come down every day and strategize for the best outcome for our clients.

Providing the highest quality of legal services continues to be of utmost importance because it is through these legal services and benefits that our clients hope to be protected. For 14 years ILJNI has provided the following specialized immigration legal services: Family petitions, Escape from Violence petitions: U-Visa (victims of crime), T-Visa (victims of trafficking), Removal Defense, Asylum (defensive and affirmative), Survivors of Domestic Violence (VAWA), humanitarian parole, Temporary Protected Status (TPS), Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA), Adjustment of Status, Naturalization, and Special Juvenile Immigrant Status (SIJ).

Throughout the years ILJNI has become known for its humanitarian relief work and specifically for its asylum work-both affirmative and defensive asylum as well as removal defense work. Our removal defense work has been representing many defensive asylum cases since our founding as well. Our defensive asylum clients are from across continents: Nigeria, Togo, and Ghana in West Africa; Guatemala and Honduras in Central America to Bolivia in South America. ILJNI has also represented immigrants in removal proceedings from various countries.

Legal services are offered free of charge to individuals who are under 200% of the federal poverty level in Northern Illinois north of Interstate 80. NIJFON specifically offers these services to immigrant families with little or no access to immigration resources throughout Northern Illinois in 5 specific areas: Aurora (Kane and DuPage Counties), Chicago (Cook County), Rockford (Winnebago, Boone, Stephenson Counties), Buffalo Grove (Lake County), Crystal Lake (McHenry County). The immigrant families that we serve have little or no access to an immigration attorney and are at risk of fraud. ILJNI believes that having access to a free legal immigration consultation with a qualified attorney, whether the client has an immigration benefit at the time of the appointment or not, is extremely important because it provides the client with expert advice that can protect them from becoming victims of fraud risking deportation and family separation.

In 2025 we provided legal services for over 300 cases. These included humanitarian relief cases like asylum, removal defense and U-visa. We also assisted clients with work permits, DACA renewals and citizenship cases. We opened 53 cases and closed 20 cases. We provided over 3,000 Know Your Rights presentations. Our legal staff provides our clients with up-to-date information on the changes in immigration law. Clients constantly call in concerned about their cases and are eager to secure legal status, afraid of being detained. Our team of community navigators, who are local volunteers that provide Know Your Rights workshops, provide accompaniments, help with translations and put together family plans for our clients in case they are detained.

We have a Welcoming Center in Rockford at Court Street United Methodist Church. Our staff at the Welcoming Center give Know Your Rights, legal referrals and register community members to legal workshops to provide access to advice and counsel on their immigration cases. Through the Welcoming Center we have served over 300 clients with Know Your Rights workshops in 2025 and provided access to legal services to over 200 community members.

Aside to our direct service work we advocate for immigrant rights on a local, state and federal level. Locally we work with local municipalities to ensure that the Trust Act is upheld and that immigrants are protected and that local municipalities are not working with ICE or putting communities in danger. On the state level we work with state partners like the Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights (ICIRR) and Access to Justice (ILA2J) to meet with our legislators and introduce positive immigrant legislation to protect immigrants. On the national level we work with the Immigration Law and Justice Network to organize national advocacy days and campaigns to make our voices heard and positively affect policy. We also organize national webinars to share migrant stories in a meaningful and respectful way and have migrant voices uplifted.

400.34 Commission on Archives & History Historical Report

Rev Carol Noren

The 2025-2026 year has been a busy, productive, and unsettled year for the NIC Commission on Archives and History. With the impending move of G-ETSeminary to a new location in 2027, and its archives to a location yet to be determined, we have consulted with Elaine Moy, an NIC executive, about the wisest way forward. It is clear that the conference archives will have to move! Among the questions being discussed are a) whether moving to the Conference offices, an active UMC, or another setting is best; b) the need for a climate-controlled location for preservation of materials; c) whether the new location will be interim or permanent; d) logistics of storage (compact shelving or other); e) preserving the order of the current archives as much as possible, so that a new inventory/finding aid does not have to be developed; f) securing a space that is accessible for the volunteer archivists to receive and process incoming materials, and respond to research requests; and, g) funding for archival supplies and moving.

We have been fortunate, this last year, to have Cate Whitcomb join our ranks as a commission member and volunteer archivist. As archivist at First UMC Evanston, she brings valuable experience to our work. Each active member of the commission has an area of expertise: Dan Swinson is the Conference historian, Dick Wang is the go-to person for questions about Norwegian-Danish Methodism, Marilyn Steenwyk's years with UMW/United Women in Faith makes that her specialty, and Carol Noren responds to any research requests involving the former Swedish Methodist churches in the conference.

We worked approximately sixteen days in the archives, in addition to having Commission meetings and Zoom planning meetings with representatives from other conferences for the North Central Jurisdiction's annual convocation, which will be held in Dubuque in October 2026. We have processed incoming boxes of materials from Lisle: Faith UMC, Cortland UMC, West Chicago and Winfield UMC, Calvary/Grace UMC, Evanston: Wheadon UMC, Norwood Park UMC, Ohio UMC, Malden UMC, Franklin Grove UMC, Sterling: Trinity UMC, Joliet: Richards Street UMC, Chicago: Mandell UMC, Freeport:

Embury UMC, Aurora: Flowing Forth UMC, Blue Island: Grace UMC. In addition, Marilyn organized and created new files for NIC-CAH, UMW, Marcy-Newberry Center, “In the News” and Inactive NIC Clergy. We responded to approximately thirteen research requests; most had to do with documentation of baptisms or genealogy.

For the rest of 2026, we expect our work to be concentrated on two tasks: preparing for the NCJ convocation in October, and processing as many banker’s boxes as possible prior to our anticipated move in the spring of 2027.

400.35 Camp and Retreat Ministry Task Force Historical Report

Rev. Rob Hamilton, Chair

How This Work Began

In August of 2025, Bishop Schwerin convened the Camp and Retreat Ministry Task Force in response to a growing awareness that our Conference had reached a point of impasse in its camp and retreat ministries.

These were not new concerns. Questions around governance, financial sustainability, property stewardship, and program direction had surfaced repeatedly over many years. Reports had been written. Plans had been proposed. Yet many of the same challenges remained.

Recognizing this pattern, the Bishop brought together key stakeholders: Outdoor and Retreat Ministries (ORM), the Board of Trustees, members of the Cabinet, CCFA, ACST, youth directors, clergy and laity of various ages and stages not simply to study the issues again, but to work through them together.

The call is to move toward clarity, shared understanding, and a path forward that could support a vibrant, inclusive, and mission-driven camp experience for all.

What We Discovered Along the Way

As the Task Force began its work, it quickly became clear that the current challenges are part of a much longer story.

Historical documents, including prior legislation and consultant reports, reveal that many of the questions we are asking today have been asked before.

Across decades of leadership, several themes have remained consistent:

- A tension between mission and structure, where decisions about organization and governance often precede clarity about purpose
- Ongoing concerns about financial sustainability, including cost overruns and the increasing burden of maintaining aging properties
- The complexity of property ownership and deferred maintenance, especially as usage patterns shift
- Questions of liability and compliance, which have grown more significant over time
- A desire for programs that are vibrant, inclusive, and relevant, even as participation and engagement change

In many ways, what we are experiencing now is not a new crisis, but a continuation of longstanding systemic dynamics.

What This Task Force Has Done

Rather than attempting to solve these challenges in isolation, the Task Force focused first on bringing the right people into the same room.

For perhaps the first time in a sustained way, representatives from ORM, Trustees, and the Cabinet engaged these questions together. Listening, naming concerns, and working toward shared understanding. This has not resolved every issue. But it has changed the conversation.

Where there was once fragmentation, there is now greater alignment. Where decisions were often made in parallel, there is now a growing sense of shared ownership.

The work of this Task Force has been, in many ways, about creating the conditions for faithful decision-making, not rushing prematurely to conclusions.

Where We Find Ourselves Now

At the same time, several significant challenges remain in front of us.

We continue to face:

- Financial pressures, including outstanding account receivables and questions about long-term sustainability
- Decisions about mission and purpose, which must inform how we prioritize resources, programs, and structure
- Governance questions, particularly around clarity of roles and accountability
- Liability and compliance concerns, which carry increasing weight in how camp and retreat ministries are structured and operated
- Ongoing discernment about property and infrastructure, including what is essential, what is sustainable, and what may need to change

These are not small matters. And they are deeply interconnected. Decisions about structure cannot be made without clarity about mission. Decisions about our mission inevitably shape priorities. And those priorities, in turn, influence how we steward resources, manage risk, and organize for the future.

How We Have Approached the Work

Given this complexity, the Task Force has approached its work with a spirit of honesty, collaboration, and patience.

We have sought:

- To name realities clearly, without blame or avoidance
- To learn from the past, recognizing patterns that have shaped our present moment
- To engage stakeholders together, rather than allowing decisions to remain siloed
- To work through long-standing impasses, rather than deferring them once again
- To hold the mission of disciple formation at the center, even as we continue to clarify how our structures can best support that mission

This has not been quick work. But it has been necessary work.

Looking Ahead

This report is not the conclusion of the conversation. It is a moment within a much longer journey. The Task Force believes that the next step is not simply to revisit old questions, but to take faithful action informed by both our history and our present reality.

Task Force Membership

The Camp and Retreat Ministry Task Force was composed of the following members, representing a broad cross-section of leadership across the Northern Illinois Conference:

Danita Anderson, Jeff Brace, Linda Brennan, Jeff Casey, Beverly Dukes, Kim Emery, Fabiola Grandon-Mayer, Rob Hamilton, Daniel Lee, Rosa Lee, Victor Melad Jr., Kelly McKune, Elaine Moy, John Smoke, Bishop Dan Schwerin, Eugene Williams

400.36 Chicago Black Methodists for Church Renewal Historical Report

Glynis P. Massey, Director

The Northern Illinois Conference approved the 2026 Program Budget Proposal of \$50,000 for Chicago BMCR. We are extremely grateful for this funding to continue supporting the conference priorities of making Disciples of Jesus Christ.

NIC Lake South Leadership Training: BMCR members attended the Lake South Leadership Training on January 18, 2025, at South Suburban Korean UMC in Flossmoor.

NIC Martin Luther King, Jr. Celebration: The Northern Illinois Annual Conference Martin Luther King Jr. Worship Service was held January 19, 2025, at First UMC in Downers Grove. Rev. Danita R. Anderson, Assistant to Bishop Dan Schwerin, served as keynote speaker and delivered the message titled "The Unfinished Agenda." The service also honored the life and ministry of Rev. Dennis M. Oglesby Jr.

Annual Conference Shepherdling Team: During the first half of the year Chicago BMCR was without a president. Darryl Harris (Gorham UMC) continued to faithfully represent BMCR on the Annual Conference Shepherdling Team until a new president was elected in July 2025.

Black Teens Matter Holiday Hook Up: Chicago BMCR sponsored 42 youth and adults to attend the production "1619 – The Journey of a People" at the Beverly Arts Center on February 16, 2025. The production traced the African American experience through music, dance, and spoken word.

Annual Laity Roundtable: The Annual Laity Roundtable was held February 28 in conjunction with St. Mark UMC's Black History Dinner and Movie Night featuring the film *The Six Triple Eight*. Twelve BMCR members attended and engaged in dialogue addressing concerns and opportunities within local congregations.

Rust College Concert – St. Mark UMC: In April, St. Mark UMC hosted the Rust College A Cappella Choir. The choir delivered an inspiring evening of sacred music celebrating the musical heritage of historically Black colleges and universities.

Harambee – Tougaloo College: In June, BMCR sponsored nine youth and six chaperones from Maple Park UMC and Resurrection UMC to attend the Harambee Youth Conference at Tougaloo College in Mississippi. The conference theme was "FIRE: Fearless, Intelligent, Resilient, Excellent."

Annual June Worship Service: The BMCR Annual June Worship Service was held June 22, 2025, at Ingleside-Whitfield UMC. Rev. P. Devon Brown delivered the message. The service celebrated graduates, confirmands, clergy milestones, and retirees. Ms. Sylvia Jo Oglesby was recognized for more than 55 years of service to BMCR. Newly elected Executive Board members were installed.

BMCR Newly Elected Executive Board: Rev. Dr. Charles A. Woolery Sr., President; Rev. Beverly Dukes, Pembroke Chair; Madison Downlen, Vice President; Rev. G. Morris Jarkloh, Pembroke Co-Chair; Glynis P. Massey, Recording Secretary & Director; Rev. Marcus L. Tab, Advocacy; Lillye Hart, Treasurer; Rev. Innis L. Miller III, BUMP Rep.; Dwayne Cecil, Financial Secretary; Rev. Dr. Addison Shields Jr., Investments; Pearl Hall, Membership; Deborah L. Dangerfield, Parliamentarian & Assistant to the President; Rev. Luther C. Mason, Program Chair; Rev. Sandra Gullede, At Large Member; Rev. D. Josiah Montgomery, Finance Chair; Carolyn McBride, At Large Member; Open – Communications Director; Rev. Valorie Tatum, At Large Member

Northern Illinois Annual Conference – BMCR Lunch & Learn: BMCR hosted a Lunch & Learn on June 10, 2025, at the Renaissance Schaumburg Convention Center during the Northern Illinois Annual Conference. Sixty-two attendees participated and viewed the Legacy of Faith video followed by discussion with Donald Lusk.

St. Mark UMC Men's Health Forum: BMCR supported the Men's Health Forum at St. Mark UMC on September 13, 2025, featuring Cook County Commissioner Bill Lowry and Dr. Alan Jackson of Rush University Medical Center.

Northern Illinois Conference Youth Retreat: BMCR sponsored four youth and two chaperones from Resurrection UMC to attend the NIC Youth Retreat held September 26–28, 2025, at Lutherdale Camp in Wisconsin.

Lake South District Revival: BMCR members attended the Lake South District Revival on September 28, 2025, at First UMC Lansing. The worship service featured multilingual preaching and a spirit-filled time of fellowship.

BMCR NCJ Annual Meeting: BMCR members attended the North Central Jurisdiction BMCR 53rd Annual Meeting in Indianapolis, November 13–14. The gathering provided fellowship, leadership development, and collaboration among BMCR members across the jurisdiction.

BMCR Fall Membership Drive: A fall membership drive across local churches resulted in approximately 20 new BMCR members.

34th Laity Awards & 57th Founders' Day Celebration: The Laity Awards Luncheon was held December 13, 2025, at Chateau Del Mar in Hickory Hills. This event drew more than 320 attendees. More than 40 lay leaders were honored for their dedicated service to their churches and communities.

BMCR Staff continues to ensure that we have a BMCR presence at most local church events and special programs.

400.37 Fellowship of Asian American (FAA) Caucus Historical Report

Rev. Cerna Castro Rand, President

The Fellowship of Asian Americans (FAA) is a caucus within the Northern Illinois Conference (NIC) that is rich in diversity, comprising both laity and clergy, active or retired from a multitude of Asian cultures. As of 2025, the FAA has over 100 plus members committed to fostering a supportive and inclusive community. Within the FAA, a wide array of perspectives is reflected, with representatives from different countries: China, India, Korea, Myanmar (Burma), Pakistan, Philippines, and Vietnam. This cultural mosaic brings a wealth of insights and experiences for the FAA and to our conference, enriching conversations and enhancing the FAA's ability to lead and serve in various committees through the Northern Illinois Conference. Through our diversity, we strengthen our relationships and build a more cohesive community.

The FAA organizes two significant annual meetings dedicated to fellowship, providing support and inspiration. The first meeting takes place during the Annual Conference session in June. We met at Royal Buffet in Hoffman Estates with approximately 80 people in attendance composed of active and retired clergy, laity, seminarians from Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary (G-ETS), missionaries, and guests. At this event, we celebrated and honored our retired pastors and newly Commissioned and Ordained Asian American Clergy with gift cards. In October, we had an election of new officers (Executive Committee) to lead FAA from January 2026 to January 2028. The newly elected officers are:

President – Rev. Cerna Castro Rand, Vice-President – Rev. Dr. Linny Hartzell, Secretary – Rev. Heewon Kim, Treasurer/Scholarship – Dr. Agnes Guevarra, Advocacy – Rev. Romir Esguerra (Retired)

The second gathering was held on Sunday, December 14, 2025, at 4pm at Our Saviour's United Methodist Church in Schaumburg. We had an Advent Worship Service and we celebrated the ministries we have accomplished throughout the year. During the worship service the newly elected Executive Committee was installed by the outgoing president, Rev. Jeremiah Lee. The newly elected president, Rev. Cerna Castro Rand, recognized the excellent leadership of the outgoing officers with appreciation. These gatherings serve as vital opportunities for FAA members to connect, share experiences, and to provide mutual encouragement and support.

The FAA is deeply committed in supporting its youth, seminary students, and local churches, including their various programs. Recognizing the importance of nurturing future leaders and ensuring the growth and vitality of our communities, the FAA provides financial assistance by offering scholarships and program grants to ethnic churches. In 2025, we awarded 9 seminary and academic scholarships at \$700 each.

In 2025, the FAA continues to thrive as a diverse and inclusive organization dedicated to fostering fellowship and support among its members to serve the broader conference. Right now our conference have two Asian District Superintendents: Rev. Dr. Hwa-Young Chong, District Superintendent Prairie North District and Rev. Victor O. Melad, Jr., Superintendent of Lake North District. We praise God for their leadership in our conference. Through our diversity, we enrich our conversations, strengthens our relationships, and build a more united and dynamic community. The FAA remains committed to its mission of supporting the young people, seminary students, clergy, and local church programs, ensuring a bright future for all members and the communities they serve. And most importantly to follow in the footsteps of Asian American leaders in the conference who paved the way for inclusion, diversity and solidarity in proclaiming the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Our mission is to be Christ for each other and to announce the good news to all people. To God be the glory!

FAA Executive Committee: President – Rev. Cerna Castro Rand, Vice-President – Rev. Dr. Linny Hartzell, Secretary – Rev. Heewon Kim, Treasurer/Scholarship – Dr. Agnes Guevarra, Advocacy – Rev. Romir Esguerra (Retired)

400.38 Hispanic / Latinx Ministry Historical Report

Rev. Noemí Meza and Rev. Lino Aragón, Co-Chairs

This 2025–2026 year has been a time of growth and adaptation for the Hispanic/Latinx Ministry. As co-chairs, Reverend Noemí Meza and Reverend Lino Aragón have focused on strengthening connections among our churches, supporting our leaders, and responding to the current needs of our communities.

Throughout the year, we participated in several important gatherings and events that supported our churches, leaders, and communities:

Know Your Rights Webinar (JFON) – February 3, 2025: Educational session to support immigrant communities with legal awareness.

Solidarity with the Stranger Webinar – February 10, 2025: A seminar focused on understanding immigration in the United States and our Christian response.

School of Ministry (Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary / NCJ) – March 28–30, 2025: A gathering for Hispanic leaders focused on renewing our call to ministry in the Wesleyan spirit.

Cena Latinx – Northern Illinois Annual Conference – June 10, 2025: Held at Our Saviour UMC in Schaumburg, this gathering strengthened relationships across the conference.

MARCHA (NIC Advocacy Gathering) – August 1–3, 2025: Held in Arlington Heights, focusing on advocacy, justice, and community engagement.

Conversando with the Bishop (Virtual) – September 22, 2025: A time of dialogue, connection, and shared vision with episcopal leadership.

Entre Nos / Hispanic Latinx & El Plan Gathering – September 28–October 1, 2025: Held in Durham, North Carolina. This national gathering takes place every two years, bringing together Hispanic/Latinx leaders to share the concerns of our communities of faith and to develop strategies and solutions for the challenges we face.

Facing the Future – October 7–9, 2025: We supported Hispanic pastoral leadership by sponsoring participation in this event.

Hispanic Heritage Month (Virtual Celebration) – October 18, 2025: We celebrated our culture and faith through a virtual gathering with participation from multiple congregations.

Latinx Christmas Celebration (Pastors and Families) – December 1, 2025 (Evening): Pastors and their families gathered for fellowship, worship, and encouragement.

El Plan Visits (Chicago Area) – December 1, 2025 (Morning) and ongoing: We visited churches and communities affected by ICE raids, including the Broadview Detention Center, offering prayer and support.

Safe Sanctuary Training (Spanish) – January 17, 2026: Training to equip churches with safe ministry practices.

Martin Luther King Jr. Celebration Sunday – February 18, 2026: Hosted at Trinity UMC, Mount Prospect, promoting unity, justice, and reflection.

Academy of Lay Servants (Spanish) – April 5, 2026: Continued commitment to developing lay leadership within our churches.

In addition, the Hispanic pastoral cohort meets regularly to support one another, share experiences, and identify challenges affecting our congregations and communities. Together, we seek faithful and creative ways to respond to these needs, with the support of the Northern Illinois Conference and the Cabinet.

Today, the life of our Hispanic congregations is not easy. We are living in difficult times. Yet we remain a community—a pilgrim people—walking under God's grace, standing in resistance, and living in hope.

We extend our deepest gratitude to our Bishop and Cabinet for their unwavering dedication and unconditional commitment to serving the Hispanic community, especially during these challenging times. Your leadership has been a guiding light, reflecting true solidarity, generosity, justice, and compassionate support for those in need. Through your tireless efforts, you have strengthened our community, uplifted spirits, and reminded us of the power of faith and unity. We are truly thankful for your service, your vision, and your steadfast presence among us.

Love Boldly • Serve Joyfully • Lead Courageously

"Love your neighbor as yourself." — Bible, Matthew 22:39

400.39 Africa University Historical Report

James H. Salley, President and Chief Executive Officer – Africa University (Tennessee) Inc., and Associate Vice Chancellor for Institutional Advancement – Africa University (Zimbabwe)

Grace and peace to you in the name of Jesus Christ.

Thank you to the congregations of the Northern Illinois Conference of The United Methodist Church for your faithful and gracious support of Africa University. In 2025, Northern Illinois Conference congregations generously invested at 79.5 percent in the Africa University Fund apportionment.

This level of steadfast commitment makes a real difference in forming disciples who love boldly, serve joyfully, and lead courageously across Africa and around the world. Thank you for standing in the gap for the students, faculty and staff of Africa University.

2025 was a year of robust growth and momentum for Africa University (AU). In June, AU graduated its largest class ever—622 students from 20 African countries. In August, the university welcomed its most diverse incoming class, with students from 30 nations. They study in four colleges, a law school, and two institutes on a modern, fully debt-free campus built for learning and community.

2025 highlights:

- A self-funded solar power plant now supplies 100 percent of AU campus electricity, easing pressure on Zimbabwe's national grid and benefiting nearby communities. The plant is saving Africa University close to \$250,000 a year in electricity costs.
- A new collaboration with the United Nations University Institute for Water, Environment and Health advances research in food security, sustainable agriculture, and environmental resilience. Faculty and graduate researchers are developing evidence-based responses to climate stress, water insecurity, and agricultural vulnerability—equipping communities to adapt and thrive.
- An expanded partnership supporting applied research with The United Methodist Church's Global Ministries agency focuses on at-risk agriculture and malaria prevention, strengthening rural communities.
- In partnership with United Methodist Communications, AU is training African church communicators in digital engagement and media strategy—strengthening the Church's witness across diverse contexts.
- AU's School of Law moot court team earned the honor of representing Africa at the World Round of the Price Media Law Moot Court Competition in the United Kingdom in 2026.

Africa University's growing impact is directly connected to your generosity. As this quadrennium continues, Africa University is counting on every congregation in the Northern Illinois Conference to maintain AUF support at the 2016 budget level and strive for 100 percent funding each year. Local churches are also invited to consider becoming "Keystone Congregations" by committing \$7,000 annually in direct scholarship support for one undergraduate student—and walking alongside that student with prayer and encouragement throughout their degree journey.

Africa University remains a living expression of our worldwide connection. Your continual engagement is pivotal. Because you pray, Northern Illinois United Methodists, leaders are called and formed. Because you give, research advances. Because you believe in Africa University, hope expands across nations.

Thank you for standing with AU. Together, we are shaping a generation equipped to lead Africa—and the Church—into a resilient and faithful future.

400.40 Boston University School of Theology Historical Report

G. Sujin Pak, Dean

Your partnership, prayers, and support are a cherished gift as BUSTH seeks to serve the church and the world! In a year like 2025, BUSTH's commitments to equip transformational leaders for peace and justice are more necessary and significant. We are hopeful and vigilant in our continued partnership with you.

NEWS:

- **Students:** The academic year 2025-26 entering class was among our most diverse, with 106 new students, 40% of whom are international students from 17 different countries.
- **Faculty:** In July, Rebecca Copeland and Luis Menéndez-Antuña were promoted to Associate Professor. In September, Nicolette Manglos-Weber became Associate Dean of Students & Community Life, and Rady Roldán-Figueroa ('05) started as Associate Dean for Academic Affairs. Timothy Adkins-Jones ('09,'21) joined as Assistant Professor of Homiletics.
- **Expanding Online/Hybrid Programming:** BUSTH launched a fully Online Master of Divinity (OM-Div) program in November and the first cohort is planned for Fall 2026. Learn more at bu.edu/sth/omdiv. In May, the Doctor of Ministry (DMin) program graduated its largest class ever, 18.
- **Faculty Research:** Professor Steven Sandage is a co-principal investigator for "Training and Treatment Integration Research for Virtue and Flourishing in Mental Healthcare: A Team Science Project," which received a \$5.2 million grant from the John Templeton Foundation to address a growing need among therapists for training on how to integrate relational virtues and human flourishing in clinical practice. Faculty published more than 130 books, scholarly articles, op-eds, presentations, and book reviews during 2025. Many were interviewed by media publications or featured on podcasts for their scholarship in topics such as trauma-informed care, humility among religious leaders, and biblical agriculture. Selected stories: bu.edu/sth/research/faculty-research/.
- **Scholarships:** BUSTH continues to benefit from nearly 125 scholarships overall, donated to by school alumni, other BU alumni, and friends of BU including more than 20 named scholarships from living alumni and/or their family members.
- **Contextual Education:** Funded by the Lilly Endowment, Director of Contextual Education Anastasia Kidd and Director of Enrollment Chad Moore will lead "The New Wineskins Network" \$1 million initiative to build sustainable, collaborative infrastructure for student and clergy formation across the Boston region.
- **Online Lifelong Learning:** BUSTH offers online courses for professional and spiritual enrichment of religious leaders. Recent offerings include "Digital Ministry as Contemplative Practice." Learn more at bu.edu/sth/oll.
- **Development:** Recent accomplishments include a generous pledge to endow a Praise & Worship Fund as well as some new operating funds including the Manoog C. Peters Chaplaincy Fund to further support the school's chaplaincy curriculum, and the Center for Global Christianity and Mission Film Project Fund to promote the Center's ministry.

COMMITMENT TO JUSTICE and COMPASSION:

- BUSTH's inaugural Fr. Vincent Machozi ('15) Colloquium will be held in February to honor the life's work of our alumnus, martyred in the DRC for his work advocating for civilian victims of political violence. "Ecologies of Peacemaking" will bring together scholars in the areas of social conflict, economic inequalities, and environmental degradation. Register at bu.edu/sth/machozi-colloquium.

- Our Fall 2025 Lowell Lecture presented the work of Rev. Dr. Micah L. McCreary, whose topic “Leading Through and Beyond our Wounds” focused on becoming trauma-responsive leaders.

Work continues to improve accessibility, sustainability, and responsible investing as written in our 2030 Strategic Plan. BUSTH is the first certified Green School at BU.

400.41 Candler School of Theology Historical Report

Office of Communications, Candler School of Theology, Emory University

As Candler School of Theology at Emory University continues in its second century of educating faithful and creative leaders for the church’s ministries throughout the world, we are heartened by the work and witness of The United Methodist Church and look forward to our enduring partnership as the denomination moves into its next chapter with a vision to love boldly, serve joyfully, and lead courageously.

An official seminary of The United Methodist Church, Candler has a strong Methodist presence among our students, faculty and staff, while holding true to the Wesleyan value of ecumenical openness. Our student body reflects the diversity and breadth of the Christian faithful, with an enrollment of 507 from 11 countries, 42 states, 45 denominations, 34 UM annual conferences, and 50% persons of color. We see this diversity as a blessing, enriching our life together and providing the perfect context for training for relevant ministry in the 21st century—ministry that cultivates community across difference, welcomes all to contribute and belong, and embodies Christ’s love in and among us.

Last fall Candler welcomed its largest incoming class in over a decade. This strong enrollment reflects years of intentional work to reimagine programs, continue to invest in faculty excellence, and offer robust scholarship support through the generosity of alumni and friends. And even more importantly, it reflects that God is still calling people to join the holy work of transforming the world in Jesus’ name.

Candler offers six degrees, most of which are available in hybrid or online formats. Nearly a quarter of MDiv students participate in Candler’s Teaching Parish program, earning course credit by serving as student pastors in local churches. And our proven DMin program—with a remarkably high 94% completion rate—is 90% online. These flexible options along with Candler’s recognized academic excellence and hands-on learning opportunities are opening possibilities for more people to follow God’s call to ministry.

Reducing financial barriers to high-quality theological education remains a top priority at Candler. This year, we are on track to award nearly \$8.5 million in scholarship support across degree programs. All MDiv students receive scholarships, with those who are certified candidates for ordained ministry in the UMC receiving full tuition.

Several programs beyond our formal degrees make Candler a true hub of Christian learning. The Candler Foundry, our public theological education initiative, offers in-person and online courses, events, and certificate programs. The United Methodist Course of Study School at Candler worked with 19 annual conferences to educate licensed local pastors in 2025. The Candler Center for Christian Leadership, which trains United Methodist leaders in best business practices, now has certified facilitators in 33 annual conferences. And a recent \$10 million grant from Lilly Endowment will further develop Candler’s La Mesa Academy, a multicultural, multilingual program dedicated to the theological education of lay ministers.

We are preparing for a leadership transition in summer of 2026, as Jonathan Strom completes his tenure as dean of Candler in July. We invite your prayers as we search for the school’s next dean.

When we talk to Candler alumni and students about their call, one thing becomes clear: The specifics may be different, shaped by their unique gifts, contexts, and life experiences, but their drive to join God’s work of transforming lives and the world is a constant. We recently launched a series called “Candler Changemakers” highlighting the range of fascinating ways our alumni are leading change as they fulfill their call. Follow along on our website (candler.emory.edu) and social media to see how God is working through them. You’ll be inspired!

400.42 Drew University Theological School Historical Report

Rev. Edwin David Aponte, PhD, ThD (honorary), Dean and Professor of Religion & Culture

Drew University Theological School is a global seminary with a global student population serving the worldwide church. Drew Theological School educates and mentors pastors, preachers, deacons, activists, teachers, thought leaders, and change agents for ministry and service in the church, society, and the wider world. Building upon its Wesleyan and Methodist foundations, Drew Theological School is diverse in theology, vocations, age, as well as racial, ethnic, national, and international identities of its faculty, students, and staff. Many Drew students are just beginning their ministry, while others come to graduate theological education with prior ministry experience, reflecting an ongoing trend among theological schools in the United States and Canada. In providing theological education to the world, Drew holds in-person classes in Madison, New Jersey, classes that meet exclusively online, while others meet in hybrid fashion, i.e., partially online, partially in-person, as well as in-person Doctor of Ministry program in South Korea. Regular chapel services are offered in a hybrid way on Tuesdays and Thursdays with people participating from Seminary Hall as well as online. Chapel worship is live-streamed so that students, alumni, and friends around the world can participate.

In Fall 2025 Drew Theological School welcomed 88 new students in all degree programs, with total student enrollment (by headcount) in Fall 2025 semester being 365. Enrollment of international students at Drew is very strong at 140 students in Fall 2025. This number includes students who are studying full-time in the U.S.A. on a student Visa, students who are studying online from their home country, and students in the South Korean Cohort of the Doctor of Ministry program.

Drew's interdisciplinary degree programs provide real-world apprenticeships, promote adaptive leadership skills, and encourage innovation through team-taught core courses as well as a variety of electives that integrate theological disciplines and faith practices. The Drew faculty's shared values are infused across in the teaching, learning, and the formation of students. These values are: 1) a commitment to anti-racism; 2) gender and sexual-identity equality; 3) eco-sustainability and environmental justice; and 4) interfaith understanding and cooperation. Drew Theological School continues to experience an increase in United Methodist students, including United Methodist Global Fellows pursuing further education for ministry. UMC graduates are serving in conferences of The United Methodist Church across the United States, and especially within nearby regional episcopal areas of Greater New Jersey, Eastern Pennsylvania, Susquehanna, Upper New York, New York, and New England.

400.43 Duke Divinity School Historical Report

Edgardo Colón-Emeric, Dean of Duke Divinity School

Duke Divinity School celebrated its 99th Opening Convocation in August 2025 with a sermon from Dean Edgardo Colón-Emeric to begin the Nicene Creed Preaching Series at Duke Divinity School. He emphasized that the Nicene Creed is both a Pentecost profession and a peace proclamation:

“Perhaps this is the season for untangling the Nicene Creed from state theology and church theology. Perhaps this is a task for a divinity school whose mission claims to ‘engage in spiritually disciplined and academically rigorous education, in service and witness to the Triune God in the midst of the church, the academy, and the world.’ ... Christ did not preach peace looking for recognition or awards. His life is a single extended sermon on peace. Peace is believing that our lowest point does not limit our highest hope, because we acknowledge the power of baptism, the possibility of repentance, and the forgiveness of sin. We believe. We believe. This is a Pentecost profession, a peace proclamation, and also a praise pronouncement.”

This year we have joined with Christians around the world to commemorate the 17th centennial of the Council of Nicaea and the Nicene Creed. Duke Divinity scholars and ministry leaders published the book *Trinitarian Matters: 1700 Years of Shaping Christian Identity and Practice*. The school hosted two events to explore and learn from Nicaea: Convocation & Pastors' School, focused for those in church and voca-

tional ministry; and “Visible and Invisible: Surprising Encounters in Theology and the Arts,” with musical performances, poetry, and artistic expressions informed by the richness of the Nicene Creed.

Through God’s sustaining grace, we continue to welcome students from across the nation and around the world to be trained for faithful ministries serving God. In 2025, we were joined by 219 students. The Master of Divinity program gained 120 new students in residential and hybrid programs, a 10 percent growth over last year. The Master of Arts in Christian Practice enrolled six new students; the Doctor of Ministry, 34; Master of Theology, seven; Master of Theological Studies, 32; the Doctor of Theology five; the Certificate in Theology and Health Care 14.

Duke Divinity is committed to facilitating clear and supportive pathways into theological education. We confirmed an MOU with Huntingdon College, reaffirming our mutual dedication to nurturing vocations, strengthening the United Methodist tradition, and investing in the next generation of Christian leaders.

We welcomed four new faculty this year: Jonathan Tran, professor of theological ethics; Natalie Carnes, professor of theology; Matthew Whelan, associate research professor of theology; and Nina Balmaceda, Irene and William McCutchen Associate Professor of the Practice of Reconciliation and director of the Center for Reconciliation.

Duke Divinity School continues to be grateful for our ongoing participation in The United Methodist Church and partnership with this annual conference. We look forward to our work with you as we join in the task of preparing people for Christian ministry. To learn more about Duke Divinity School, please visit our website at www.divinity.duke.edu.

400.44 Gammon Theological Seminary Historical Report

Dr. Candace M. Lewis, President & CEO

GAMMON THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY remains the only Historically Black Theological Institution (HBTI) of The United Methodist Church. Gammon Theological Seminary’s mission is to provide academic and degree-granting programs that help prepare individuals who understand their vocation as working in partnership with God in forming a just and generative world for all, for the practice of Christian ministry and public leadership.

Accreditation

- Launched Gammon’s independent Master of Divinity program in 2024 as a key step toward separate accreditation with SACSCOC and ATS.
- Hosted initial SACSCOC site visit in October 2025, received affirmation of 93% compliance on all SACSCOC Standards, final review pending the June 2026 SACSCOC Board meeting. Starting the ATS Accreditation process in 2026 with a goal of full ATS accreditation awarded by December 2027.

Enrollment

- As of Spring 2026, Gammon enrolls 41 students (10 new and 31 continuing), reflecting sustained growth since the Fall 2024 launch of the independent MDiv program.
- Student body includes 30 United Methodist-affiliated students (73.2 percent), with 28 specifically identifying as UMC (68.3 percent), demonstrating Gammon’s deep denominational roots.
- More than 70 percent of students are directly engaged in or preparing for ordained and licensed ministry: 42.5 percent actively discerning call and 30 percent already certified candidates or licensed local pastors.

- Student-to-faculty ratios have remained healthy (4:1 to 7:1), with more than 70 percent of students enrolled full-time each term, demonstrating stable instructional capacity and careful scaling.

Fund Development

- Secured a three-year, \$975,000 capacity-building grant from GBHEM to underwrite Gammon 3.0 operational expansion and strengthen institutional infrastructure.
- Received a \$375,000 grant from the William I. H. and Lula E. Pitts Foundation to support Phase III renovations, modernizing classrooms, offices, and the faculty hub for collaborative learning and academic planning.
- Obtained a \$250,000 scholarship grant from The SOMA Foundation to provide current-use aid for students in the 2025–2026 academic year, directly reducing educational debt.
- Launched the “Become 1 of 1 Million” endowed scholarship campaign fund to raise \$1 million in scholarship funds for Gammon students, enabling students to answer their call to ministry without incurring significant debt.

We offer profound thanks to God and to the entire United Methodist connection—bishops, cabinets, annual conferences, congregations, alumni, donors, and friends—for your faithful partnership in this season of renewal. Your prayers, apportionment support, special offerings, and generous gifts are establishing the work of our hands and making it possible for the vision of Gammon 3.0 to become a lived reality for current and future students. Together, we are strengthening Gammon as a vital, sustainable, and innovative seminary forming leaders for the church and the world.

400.45 Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary Historical Report

Rev. Dr. Javier A. Viera, President

Garrett Seminary continues to embody a trajectory of growth, innovation, and deepening partnership across the connection. Rooted in its Wesleyan heritage and animated by its mission to form courageous leaders in the way of Jesus, the seminary looks toward the future with confidence and hope.

For the fifth consecutive year, Garrett welcomed an entering class that reflects sustained enrollment growth. This steady expansion signals renewed confidence in our approach to theological education and in Garrett’s distinctive role within The United Methodist Church and the global Christian community. The newest students represent geographic and cultural breadth, coming from across the United States and more than twenty countries throughout the worldwide connection. They prepare for ministry in congregations, chaplaincy settings, nonprofit leadership, academia, and mission contexts, reflecting the increasingly diverse and global nature of the Church’s leadership needs.

In response to the evolving realities of ministry and lifelong learning, Garrett launched The Garrett Collective, a comprehensive digital platform offering theological resources, courses, learning experiences, and stackable microcredentials. Designed to serve laity and clergy alike, The Garrett Collective expands access to high-quality theological education in multiple languages and modalities. Content is curated and developed in partnership with annual conferences, congregations, and mission-driven organizations to address expressed needs across the connection. This initiative strengthens ongoing professional development for clergy, equips lay leaders for faithful witness, and extends Garrett’s reach to communities that may not otherwise have access to formal theological study. The Garrett Collective represents a significant step toward greater accessibility, affordability, and contextual responsiveness in theological education.

The seminary also announced a historic agreement with its long-standing campus partner, Northwestern University. Through this agreement, Garrett will relocate to newly designed, state-of-the-art facilities on the southern end of campus. These buildings will support the seminary’s increasingly multi-modal student body—those studying on campus, in hybrid formats, and in fully immersive online programs from across the nation and around the world. The new facilities will allow Garrett to invest more fully in vibrant residential theological formation while simultaneously expanding global access through

digital and hybrid degree offerings. This agreement reflects a deep and mutual commitment between the seminary and the university, positioning both institutions for a strong and collaborative future. Most importantly, it enables Garrett to remain focused on mission-driven initiatives for generations to come.

Garrett has also experienced significant success in foundation and grant support for innovative learning and leadership initiatives. Strategic investments have strengthened The Garrett Collective, the Center for Ecological Regeneration, the Job Institute for Spiritual Formation, the National Initiative to Strengthen Hispanic Pastoral Leaders and Congregations, the Mageto Fellows Program in partnership with Africa University, and the Faith and Leadership Collaborative. Each of these initiatives extends the seminary's relationship with congregations and their leaders, resourcing the Church in areas of ecological justice, spiritual formation, intercultural ministry, global partnership, social impact, and leadership development. Together, they represent a widening circle of accessibility and impact, ensuring that theological education is responsive to the needs of diverse communities throughout the connection and beyond.

Garrett Seminary remains deeply committed to the vitality of The United Methodist Church. Through enrollment growth, digital innovation, historic institutional partnerships, and expanding grant-supported initiatives, the seminary is strengthening its capacity to serve the Church in a season of significant transition and opportunity. Guided by the conviction that God continues to call and equip leaders for this moment, Garrett looks forward to continued partnership with annual conferences, congregations, and ministries across the connection.

400.46 Saint Paul School of Theology Historical Report

What does God require of us? To act justly, love mercifully, and walk humbly with God. At Saint Paul School of Theology, this call from Micah 6:8 shapes everything we do—from preparing pastors to serve rural communities to fostering a beloved community where all belong. Centered in Christ and rooted in the Wesleyan tradition, we are committed to forming innovative leaders who make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.

A Year of Growth and Vitality

2025 has been marked by remarkable momentum. Our Course of Study School educated 248 students—a 6% increase—with 628 course registrations, representing a 14% growth. These servant leaders are making a tangible difference: 42% serve rural communities with populations under 2,500, and 22 students serve as pastors of three or more churches. We celebrated 21 students completing the 20-course program, equipping them for licensed ministry.

Seminary enrollment grew by 9%, with a 33% increase in new students for Fall 2025. Our commitment to diversity is bearing fruit, with 29% racial diversity among students and almost even gender distribution. Students from 31 states and 220 cities connect with us through flexible online and hybrid learning options, while 16 graduates of the Course of Study School have transitioned into our degree programs.

Living Our Strategic Vision

Our Board of Trustees has recently endorsed a strategic plan that reflects our values and responds to the changing contexts of the church and the world. We are striving to become a beloved community that embodies belonging, justice, equity, and inclusion. Our new Doctor of Ministry track in Spirituality, Innovation, and Adaptive Leadership exemplifies this vision, developing change agents grounded in contemplative spirituality and equipped with emotional intelligence and intercultural competence. These same principles permeate our Master of Divinity and Master of Arts in Christian Ministry programs.

Saint Paul remains financially healthy, operating with a balanced budget, no debt, and an endowment ten times our annual expenses. This sustainability, rooted in community donations, enables us to invest in scholarships, technology, and evolving academic programs that serve our students and the church.

Looking Ahead

In 2026, we are strengthening our foundation and expanding our horizons by cultivating a vibrant alum network—a lifelong professional and spiritual home. Through mentorship, resource sharing, and collaborative ministry, we are building a dynamic ecosystem that empowers graduates from their first day of classes through retirement and beyond.

Saint Paul School of Theology invites you to join us in this journey of formation, innovation, and transformation. Together, we are preparing leaders who embody justice, mercy, and humility as they serve Christ and His church.

400.47 United Theological Seminary Historical Report

Dr. Kent Millard, President

Since 1871, United Theological Seminary has prepared faithful and fruitful Christian leaders who make disciples of Jesus Christ. In the 2024-25 fiscal year, the seminary served 642 graduate students, 275 doctoral and 375 masters,* reflecting approximately 30 percent enrollment growth since 2021 and placing United among the largest United Methodist seminaries in the United States.

A diverse community of many denominations, races and nationalities, United welcomed students from 38 states, 24 nations, and 54 denominations, with United Methodists representing the largest denominational group within the student body.

Academics

United's academic programs remain grounded in the historic Christian faith, scriptural holiness, and a commitment to the renewal of the church, preparing graduates to serve with wisdom, integrity, and hope.

United introduced a Doctor of Theology in 2024 to support pastor-scholars called to ministry at the intersection of the church and academy. The new degree program welcomed 13 students in its first year.

The seminary's Doctor of Ministry program continues to attract experienced ministry leaders seeking advanced professional education focused on faithful leadership. In the 2024-25 school year, 262 students participated in the mentor-led program.

Master's programs include eight houses of study, serving nearly 200 students in the United States and around the world, with programs offered in English, Spanish and Korean. In July 2025, 11 students attended the first Contextual Ministry Retreat for the African House of Study, held at the Kenya Methodist Conference Center in Nairobi. The Hispanic House of Study will celebrate its first class of graduates in May 2026, with candidates from across the United States, Mexico, Colombia, and Peru.

Through rigorous scholarship, intentional mentoring, worship, and community life, as well as practical engagement with the church's needs, academic life at United advances the seminary's vision of Spirit-led leaders, a Christ-like Church, and a transformed world.

Finances

United continues to focus on reducing the educational debt of its students. The Fresh Wind Campaign to raise \$10 million for the endowment is expanding scholarship opportunities for current and future students. The campaign has raised more than \$9 million toward this goal, by the grace of God and through the generosity of alumni/ae, churches, and friends of the seminary.

Looking Ahead

United enters the coming years with gratitude for God's faithfulness and confidence in God's future. Several senior leaders have answered new calls, and President Dr. Kent Millard has announced his retirement effective June 30, 2026, concluding ten years of service marked by encouragement, vision, and stability. A Presidential Search Committee is at work to identify United's next president, who will begin service on July 1, 2026.

Trusting God's promise spoken through the prophet Isaiah, "I am about to do a new thing" (Isaiah 43:19), United remains committed to preparing Christian leaders who boldly proclaim the gospel and make disciples of Jesus Christ. Thanks be to God!

*12-month unduplicated headcount enrollment for the 2024-25 fiscal year from July 1, 2024, to June 30, 2025.

400.48 Wesley Theological Seminary Historical Report

Rev. Dr. David McAllister-Wilson, President

As I complete my tenure as president of Wesley Theological Seminary, I am confident in handing the leadership to Dr. Carla Works, the 11th President of our school. Dr. Works, Dean and Woodrow and Mildred Miller Professor of Biblical Theology at Wesley DC, is a distinguished New Testament scholar, educator, and church-centered theologian.

Wesley Theological Seminary (Wesley DC) remains steadfast in its mission to equip persons for Christian ministry and leadership in the church and the world, to advance theological scholarship, and to model a prophetic voice in the public square. In a season marked by institutional change, civic uncertainty, and renewed hope for the United Methodist Church, Wesley DC actively forms leaders who are spiritually grounded, intellectually rigorous, and engaged with the world God loves through the following programs.

Master of Divinity, Master of Arts, Master of Theological Studies Degrees: Wesley DC offers Master of Divinity, Master of Arts, and Master of Theological Studies degrees through residential, hybrid, and fully online formats. Our programs serve a diverse student body representing a wide range of denominations, cultural contexts, and vocational callings. Across all modalities, Wesley DC emphasizes ministerial formation that integrates theological depth, spiritual practice, and contextual engagement. <https://www.wesleyseminary.edu/study/>

Doctor of Ministry Degree: Wesley DC remains one of the largest Doctor of Ministry programs in the United States and serves experienced ministerial leaders from across the world. In May 2025, ten chaplains from southern Africa graduated through a landmark partnership with Africa University, reflecting Wesley DC's growing global reach. Our DMin tracks for military chaplains continue to grow, including through a renewed partnership with the U.S. Army Institute for Religious Leadership. New tracks in Church Leadership Excellence, Soul Care, Global Church Leadership, and others begin in 2027; learn more about how you can grow in wisdom and leadership at: <https://www.wesleyseminary.edu/doctorofministry/program/>.

Course of Study: As the regional Course of Study school for the Northeast Jurisdiction, Wesley DC delivers the full Course of Study curriculum online. Scholar-practitioners teach these courses, equipping Local Pastors across the denomination with flexible, high-quality preparation for ministry. <https://www.wesleyseminary.edu/degree-programs/course-of-study/>

Ministry Certificates and Lifelong Learning: Wesley Pathways for Ministry offers online courses and certificates to help you discover your passion for ministry and strengthen your leadership skills, whether you are a layperson or a pastor. Courses and certificates help people gain ministry and leadership skills for church, community, and specialized ministry settings. Many courses/certificates are stackable for master's or doctoral credit and/or can be taken for CEUs. <https://www.wesleypathways.com/>

Office of Admissions: Are you ready to explore your next faithful step? The Admissions Office regularly holds in-person and online open houses for potential master's and DMin students, and admissions officers are available to answer your questions and help you discern. <https://www.wesleyseminary.edu/admissions/explorewesley/>

The Hub for (Re)imagining Ministry: Is your church ready to engage new generations or journey toward thriving in new ways? The Hub is currently accepting applications for its Engaging Young Adults nationwide, virtual cohort for congregations beginning August 2026, and will be recruiting new cohorts of congregations for Bringing Church Home (helping churches better accompany and support parents/caregivers in sharing their faith) and Children of Faith (helping churches center children in worship and formation) in fall 2026. The Hub is also entering into partnerships with UMC districts and annual conferences, equipping leaders to experiment, learn, and adapt faithfully in their local contexts. <https://www.wesleyseminary.edu/wesley-innovation-hub/>

The Lewis Center for Church Leadership: The Lewis Center welcomed Rev. Dr. Jonathan Page as its new Director in 2025. Dr. Page brings deep experience in leadership development across ecclesial and secular contexts and is guiding the Center into its next chapter of service to the Church. Through its widely read *Leading Ideas* newsletter and the *Leading Ideas Talks* podcast, the Lewis Center reaches thousands of leaders across the denomination. <https://www.churchleadership.com/>

The Henry Luce III Center for the Arts and Religion: The Luce Center welcomed Rev. Timothy Chon, MDiv, MFA as its new Director in 2025. Since Spring 2025, the Luce Center, which serves as a vital intersection of theology, creativity, and public imagination, has presented four exhibitions in the Dadian Gallery. In 2025, the Luce Center completed a major studio renovation that expanded capacity to support multiple artists-in-residence simultaneously. The Center welcomed professional Artist-in-Residence Khaleelah Harris alongside new Student Artists-in-Residence, strengthening its commitment to nurturing artists at every stage of practice. <https://www.luceartsandreligion.org/>

Center for Public Theology (CPT): CPT builds on its nearly fifty-year legacy by equipping faith leaders for thoughtful, courageous public witness. In collaboration with the Florida Annual Conference and with support from Trinity Wall Street, CPT leads a Public Theology Fellowship addressing immigration and public witness in politically diverse congregations. CPT continues to offer its flagship course, *Faith and Politics in the Public Square*, which remains open to seminarians nationwide. The course brings participants to Washington, DC for sustained engagement with policymakers, journalists, scholars, and activists. This year's cohort engaged leaders including Senator Chris Coons, NPR's Michel Martin, Judge Thomas Griffith, and Tope Folarin of the Institute for Policy Studies—preparing leaders to serve faithfully amid rapidly shifting public realities. <https://www.wesleyseminary.edu/ice/programs/public-theology/>

Community Engagement Institute: CEI forms leaders for justice-centered, community-rooted ministry. In March 2025, CEI hosted *Fostering Urban Vitality* and *a Heart for the City*, a two-day urban ministry conference in Baltimore, with support from City Seminary of New York and the Lilly Endowment. CEI offers traditional courses and immersive travel seminars open to all Master's-level students. With grants from the General Board of Global Ministries, CEI continues to offer the *Heal the Sick Health Minister's Certificate*. Since its inception, the program has trained more than 500 health ministers across 38 states and seven countries. In Spring 2026, CEI will offer *Trauma-Informed Congregations*, equipping leaders to address trauma with theological, cultural, and communal wisdom. <https://www.wesleyseminary.edu/ice/about-us/overview-2/>

Wesley Theological Seminary remains deeply committed to the United Methodist Church and to the formation of leaders who serve with humility, imagination, and courage. As the Church continues to discern its future, Wesley stands ready—faithful to its mission, responsive to the moment, and hopeful in God's ongoing work. For the Church. For the world. For such a time as this.

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